

CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MOORS MURDERERS AND
YORKSHIRE RIPPER CASES

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines written, audio-visual and musical representations of real-life British serial killers Myra Hindley and Ian Brady (the 'Moors Murderers') and Peter Sutcliffe (the 'Yorkshire Ripper'), from the time of their crimes to the present day, and their proliferation beyond the cases' immediate historical-legal context. Through the theoretical construct 'Northientalism' I interrogate such representations' replication and engagement of stereotypes and anxieties accruing to the figure of the white working-class 'Northern' subject in these cases, within a broader context of pre-existing historical trajectories and generic conventions of Northern and true crime representation.

Interrogating changing perceptions of the cultural functions and meanings of murderers in late-capitalist socio-cultural history, I argue that the underlying structure of true crime is the counterbalance between the exceptional and the everyday, in service of which its second crucial structuring technique – the depiction of physical detail – operates. Applying the theories of David Schmid and Lisa Downing to a new range of figures and artefacts I demonstrate ways true crime can expose and explore the unequal power relations inherent in capitalism, both constructing the figure of the criminal as – and uncoupling that figure from a mythology that renders them – falsely ontologically separate from normalised forms of violence.

Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of Kasper Wibe Solheim
1984-2016



the last of the famous international playboys.

The world has lost its greatest true crime and indie pub theorist, its greatest friend and consoler, and will forever be the poorer, harsher and more prosaic for your loss. Thank you for letting me drunkenly practice conference papers on you. Thank you for the worst best intentional misreadings of Christmas films. Thank you for being a friend.

How I love the romance of crime | and I wonder does anybody feel the way I do?

Oh but I do. I do.
:')

Also in memory of:

Jasmine Stewart,

Who changed my life; without whom I would have heard none of the songs.

and

Christine and Marcus Phillips

and

Pamela Ollerhead,

without whom I wouldn't be.

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x

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Introduction

This thesis examines representations of real-life serial killers Myra Hindley and Ian Brady (the 'Moors Murderers') and Peter Sutcliffe (the 'Yorkshire Ripper') in British popular culture from the time of their crimes to the present day. Investigating how such representations reflect and engage with stereotypes and anxieties accruing to the figure of the white working-class 'Northern' subject in these specific cases, it interrogates changing perceptions of the cultural functions and meanings of these killers within the wider context of late capitalist socio-cultural history. My contention is that the meanings of these murderers are constructed cultural artifacts shaped by existing discourses of Northern-ness and true crime, shaping in turn future discourses and representations.

Between July 1963 and October 1965 Myra Hindley and her boyfriend Ian Brady murdered at least five children and young people aged between 10 and 17. They buried those of their victims whose remains have been found on Saddleworth Moor, on the boundary of Greater Manchester and Yorkshire, resulting in the 'Moors Murders' press soubriquet. Theirs was the first multiple murder trial since the abolition of the death penalty in November 1965 – just one month after their arrest. Owing to this and to the case's affective themes of class and sex, rebellion and youth, and the women and children involved, public feeling was tumultuous. Their trial at Chester Assizes, lasting a fortnight from the 9th of April 1966 (with their sentencing on the 6th of May)¹ was

¹ *BBC*, 'On This Day: 6th May 1966'
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/6/newsid_2512000/2512119.stm]
[ACCESSED 09/03/16]

announced as ‘the trial of the century’² by newspapers such as *The People* and *The News of the World*. The case has since been repeatedly depicted by commentators as a national loss of innocence: a watershed moment in twentieth century British history that both permanently adhered to cultural memory of the British 1960s and proved a decisive moment in shaping national experience. Writing for *The Observer* shortly after Hindley’s death, Nicci Gerrard said

Brady and Hindley were the first modern serial killers[;] Hindley was the first woman. She was as much part of the Sixties as the Beatles and the Pill. She was the end of innocence.³

The byline of Gerrard’s piece was ‘Myra Hindley marked the end of innocence.’ In his BBC magazine article and documentary television series *Hop, Skip and Jump: The Story of Children’s Play* (2009) Steve Humphries argued the Moors Murders case was ‘one of the most sensational television news stories of the ‘60s which forever ‘change[d] the nation’s attitude towards children’s outdoors play’, helping diminish the practice by heightening parents’ fears about safety.⁴ Reflecting back on the case after fifty years, *The Daily Telegraph* assigned an even more existentially apocalyptic meaning to the crimes, titling its account, ‘Everything Died That Day’.⁵

Similarly, Peter Sutcliffe’s was a landmark case, with far-reaching and unpredictable social consequences. Dubbed the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ by the press, he was a lorry driver who attacked and murdered at least 13 women (as well as attempting to

² Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p.151; *The People*, 17th April 1966, p. 12; *The News of the World*, 17th April 1966, p. 1.

³ Nicci Gerrard, ‘The Face of Human Evil’, *The Observer*, 17th November 2002. Gerrard’s historical framing is odd here; technically the ‘modern’ era could mean any time after the 16th Century, and in general historical use ‘modern’ still more usually would designate the ‘late modern’ period beginning in the mid-1800’s. Thus this is a very bold statement to make without qualification or justifying comparisons.

⁴ Steve Humphries, ‘How stranger danger changed the way children play’, *BBC*, 2009. [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8399749.stm>] [ACCESSED 11/06/2016]

⁵ Joe Shute, ‘Everything Died That Day’, *The Telegraph*, 3rd May 2016.

murder seven more, and assaulting unknown others), some of whom were sex-workers, mostly in and around Bradford and Leeds but also in Manchester and Sheffield. The known killings began in 1975 and continued until his arrest in 1981. As Louise Wattis argues, following Chris Grover and Keith Soothill,

With the exception of the doctor Harold Shipman who murdered 215 of his patients, most of whom were women, Peter Sutcliffe has murdered more women than any other British serial killer.⁶

While the resulting ‘manhunt’⁷ was unprecedented, the police enquiry was notorious for misfortune, mismanagement and misogyny.⁸ Manifest systemic failings prompted two enquiries into the investigation, the Home Office’s Byford report and the Sampson report emerging from an internal police enquiry, which reported significant errors of judgment and operational and organisational flaws.⁹ Quite apart from the documented biases of those involved, the paper files were so numerous and heavy they needed a room with a reinforced floor to contain them, and their inefficiency prompted the introduction of the earliest version of the HOLMES (Home Office Large Major Enquiry System) system of computerized police record keeping.

In addition to the challenges of the paper filing system and ingrained prejudice, the

⁶ Louise Wattis, 'Revisiting the Yorkshire Ripper Murders: Interrogating Gender Violence, Sex Work, and Justice' in *Feminist Criminology* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2015), pp. 3 - 21; Chris Grover and Keith Soothill, 'British serial killing: Towards a structural explanation', *The British Criminology Conferences: Selected Proceedings, Volume 2. Papers from the British Criminology Conference, Queens University, Belfast, 15-19 July 1997*, 1999.

⁷ An appropriately gendered term.

⁸ '[A] culture of misogyny and victim-blaming [...] characterized the cultural habitus of police officers involved in the Ripper investigation'. Wattis, 2015, p.7.

⁹ The Byford report was instituted by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, William Whitelaw and led by the Inspector of Constabulary, Lawrence Byford, alongside an external advisory team, known as a "Super Squad", newly established in November 1980 to investigate the murders and their handling. The second inquiry, the internal police inquiry leading to the creation of the Sampson report, was established by West Yorkshire Chief Constable Ronald Gregory and headed by Assistant Chief Constable Colin Sampson, who would later be promoted to the position of Chief Constable of West Yorkshire following Ronald Gregory's retirement. Lawrence Byford, *The Yorkshire Ripper Case: Review of the Police Investigation of the Case by Lawrence Byford, Esq., C.B.E., Q.P.M., Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary* (London: Home Office, 1981).

police were thrown off course by a hoax. Letters and a tape sent to Assistant Chief Constable George Oldfield (and the *Daily Mirror*) taunted him about his failure to catch the murderer in a style modeled on the famous letters in the 'Jack the Ripper' case.¹⁰ The culprit was John Samuel Humble, a labourer from Wearside, who, prior to his apprehension, was known as 'Wearside Jack' after the region indicated by his accent on the recording, and his appropriation of the nickname from the earlier letters.¹¹ His intervention allowed Sutcliffe to avoid detection despite being questioned nine times but falsely ruled out due to his Yorkshire accent. Based on the tapes the investigation 'divert[ed] resources [... and the] focus of the inquiry [...] to Sunderland in pursuit of a killer they wrongly concluded had a strong Wearside accent and several unique speech impediments.'¹² Sutcliffe killed his final three victims between the start of the hoax in March 1978 and his arrest in January 1981.¹³ Recordings of the tape and samples of the hoaxter's writing were circulated widely and frequently. As Wattis comments,

¹⁰ 'Jack the Ripper' is the name given to a hypothetical serial killer believed to be behind a series of apparently linked murders in and around London's Whitechapel area in 1888. This name derives from a letter claiming its writer as responsible for the killings, now known as the 'Dear Boss' letter, which was sent to the Central News Agency in September 1888 and forwarded to Scotland Yard. This was followed by the 'Saucy Jack' postcard and the 'From Hell' letter, otherwise known as the 'Lusk letter', which was accompanied by a partial human kidney. Of the hundreds of letters claiming to be from the killer, these three were the most consistently thought of as potentially authentic (although even they are widely considered hoaxes) and whose contents were publically reproduced by investigators in the hope that someone would come forward with information leading to an arrest. As Jane Caputi points out, the 'modern sex crime' has been given its form by the collection of mythological details attributed to the canonical representation of this unknown Victorian murderer (or murderers); "Jack" has become a cultural reference point which reinforces and legitimates violence against women.' Jane Caputi, *The Age of the Sex Crime* (Bowling Green: State UP, 1987), p.14.

¹¹ His identity only came to light in 2005 due to a cold-case review of original files as a result of which he was jailed for eight years for perverting the course of justice.

¹² Paul Lewis, 'Court hears how Wearside Jack led Ripper detectives on wild goose chase', *The Guardian*, 21st March 2006.

¹³ The hoax was dramatised in an ITV docudrama *The Ripper Hoaxter: Wearside Jack* (2006), as part of a season of mid-century crime-related factual dramas, including *To Kidnap a Princess* (2006), and *See No Evil* (2006). There was also a broader resurgence of interest in these time periods in the 2000s and 'nostalgia TV', with the *I Love the '70s* BBC series paying homage to 1970s pop culture, consisting of ten hour-long episodes, each themed round a single year of the decade, broadcast between July and September 2000, and followed by *I Love The '80s* and *I Love The 90's*. The trend particularly focused on the 1970s, *Life on Mars* (2006-2007) and its subsequent 1980s-based spin-off *Ashes to Ashes* (2008-2010) being a case in point. Mark Blacklock has also recently represented the hoax in his 2015 novel *I'm Jack* (a fictionalised re-imagining of the 'Wearside Jack' case), which is currently being adapted as a film. Ben Child, 'Story of Yorkshire Ripper hoaxter "Wearside Jack" to be made into movie', *The Guardian*, 15th June 2015.

The tape and letters formed the basis of a massive publicity campaign launched in the latter half of 1979, involving posters, television test cards and the widespread broadcasting of the hoax tape in pubs, night-clubs, youth clubs and at football matches. It was estimated that 40,000 people a day rang up to hear the voice on the tape.¹⁴

The whole of Yorkshire and the North entered unofficial lockdown for women, who were subject to an informal curfew, encouraged, for their own safety, to avoid being in public without a male chaperone.

The two decades in which these two cases emerged saw some of the most rapid and dramatic social, political and cultural changes of the twentieth century. Questions of class, race, gender, sexuality, age, family and commodity – of Britain's place in the world and the north of England's place in Britain – were in tumultuous flux: contested on multiple and contradictory fronts. The Moors Murders, like (and as part of) the 1960s, formed a pivotal cultural moment in British postwar life. As Lizzie Seal contends, mid-century legislative changes both emerged from and had an impact upon the culture and criminality of the time.¹⁵ Of these, many specifically resonate through Hindley and Brady's life and crimes, so that that neither is extricable from the other. While, as Gerrard suggests, Hindley and Brady are treated as time markers of the 1960s, the time markers and social changes of the '60s are also key to narratives of their case.

One then-recent socio-legal issue refracted through their case was the relaxation of restrictions on 'obscene' publications, leading to the famous trial of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960. The Obscene Publications Act was explicitly contested at Hindley and Brady's trial, and Brady's specifically class-loaded rebuttal to accusations

¹⁴ Wattis, 2015, p.7.

¹⁵ Lizzie Seal, *Women, Murder and Femininity: Gender Representations of Women Who Kill* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.89-90.

that his library constituted a 'sink of pornography' almost makes him seem a champion of working-class literacy: 'there are better collections in lords' manors all over the country.'¹⁶ Ripples from this moral, educational, sexual and class value-collision abound in the references to pornography, vice, and suspect reading materials that fill contemporary true crime and journalistic accounts of the killers. Jennifer Freidlander argues that 'concerns about class and economics [...] appeared in rare unabashed fashion in accounts of Hindley's crimes'.¹⁷ Hansford Johnson, who was present at the trial and produced a book-length account shortly after, suggested links between the murders, 'pornography[,] and the British Realist theatre of Shelagh Delaney, Brendan Behan and Harold Pinter', arguing neither should be available to 'minds educationally and emotionally unprepared',¹⁸ words that, as Carol Ann Lee argues, patronisingly echo prosecuting counsel Mervyn Griffiths-Jones' remarks to the jury at the *Lady Chatterley* trial: 'is this a book you would want your wife or servants to read?'¹⁹

The 1957 Wolfenden Report recommended decriminalising sex between consenting adult males (enshrined in legislation in 1967); Brady frequented gay drinking establishments, and revealed during questioning that he was bisexual, also claiming that Edward Evans's murder was part of a planned robbery and homosexual blackmail.²⁰ Such contradictions reveal the prominence and fraught nature of questions of sex, sexuality and cultural consumption in contemporary discourses, as well as lived experience.

¹⁶ Carol Ann Lee, *One of Your Own: The Life and Death of Myra Hindley* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2011), p.273.

¹⁷ Jennifer Friedlander, *Feminine Look: Sexuation, Spectatorship, Subversion* (New York: State UP, 2008), p.91.

¹⁸ Lee, p.267; Pamela Hansford Johnson, *On Iniquity: Some Personal Reflections Arising out of the Moors Murder Trial* (London: Macmillan, 1967) p.18.

¹⁹ Lee, p.78; p.268; p.412.

²⁰ Peter Topping, *Topping: The Autobiography of the Police Chief in the Moors Murders Case* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1989), p.243; p.31.

Finally, in 1957 the Homicide Act limited the application of the death penalty. Hindley and Brady's trial acted as a lightning rod for public debate about reinstating it. Gerrard claims

[o]nly months earlier [...] they would have been put to death, and our image of Hindley would have been fixed into myth: the dyed blonde hair and staring eyes, implacable, unnatural, monstrous.²¹

This statement misses the point to the extent of disingenuousness. Hanged or not, this mythologising is exactly what *has* happened to Hindley – a fact of which Gerrard cannot possibly be unaware. In some respects, however, her remark is cogent: the process certainly had its roots in legislative changes, which then, thanks to the availability of the Moors Murderers as figureheads, allowed cultural perceptions of these changes to be written into – and stand in *for* – wider narratives of both opportunity and anxiety around social change.

Dick Hebdige argues that 'the experience of modernity [is] an undecidable mix of anticipated freedoms and lost certainties incorporating both [opportunity and] the terror of disintegrating social and moral bonds, of spatial and temporal horizons.'²² The ways in which Hindley and Brady's crime is embedded in its cultural context certainly bears out Hebdige's claim. Emergent discourses of style, image, fame, sexual freedom, class mobility, changing female roles, male anger, technological innovation, aspirational consumerism, home-making and youth culture all feature in the Moors Murderers' socio-historical narrative. Their lives and appearances echo many themes of British New Wave cinema and 'angry young man' literature. In the commission and recording of their

²¹ Gerrard, 2002.

²² Dick Hebdige, 'Postmodernism and 'The Other Side'', *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, Ed. John Storey (Harlow: Pearson, 2009), p 436.

crimes they used the visual and audio technology of modernity, and could not have carried them out without the defining technology of the twentieth-century, the car.²³ Recent experience of war meant that Hindley and Brady's interest in Nazism – now an unremarkable part of the serial killer genre and a typical anti-establishment gesture – was shocking. The trauma of World War II was so recent that its resurgence into public space with their trial constituted a return of the repressed.²⁴

Contemporary anxieties about working-class affluence, mass culture and commodification were of key importance to the resonance of the case – not only from elites and working-class conservatives, but also left-wing and/or progressive commentators concerned about commercial intrusions into public and private life.²⁵ Such concerns imbricate with the doctrine of 'declinism' – a fear that affluence was morally damaging and undermining social bonds.²⁶ In his seminal work *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), originally titled *The Abuses of Literacy*, working-class academic Richard Hoggart expressed ambivalently sentimental concern over newfound sensational entertainments as debasing working-class sensibilities. This forms part of the dialectic of anxiety over proletarian consumerism; Janus-faced, like modernity itself, establishment fears (and progressive anticipation) of working-class ascendancy and power-gaining were counterbalanced in both camps by a sense of values and communities degraded, sacrificed on the altar of cheap, mass-cultural un-English pleasures.

²³ Lee, p.143.

²⁴ Lee, p.268; Hansford Johnson, p.18. See also *Beyond Belief* for a fictionalised reference to this too: 'didn't we get enough of that before the war'. Emlyn Williams, *Beyond Belief: The Moors Murderers: The Story of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley* (First published Hamish Hamilton, 1967; this edition: Pan Books: London, 1968), p.110.

²⁵ Specifically in the form – symbolical and materially – of American imports. As with 1990s' concerns about 'authentic' British and class identities, 'Americanisation' was at this time also a covert proxy for fears about racial and cultural Others.

²⁶ Seal, p.90.

Consumption has a central role in both shaping initial myths of the 'Moors Murders' and their subsequent proliferation. Active cultural consumers, Brady and Hindley constructed their own identities through such resources, rather than being passively and unconsciously shaped by these pop-cultural and philosophical genres.²⁷ As Lee and Helen Birch argue, Hindley self-consciously styled herself within a canon of (particularly evil or amoral) femininity, her look based on female Nazi Irma Grese, 'Hitchcock blondes', and film noir femme fatales.²⁸ Hindley is both produced by culture and re-fed into cultural production so what Birch calls her 'excessive femininity' actually embodies normality in extremis.²⁹ Marina Warner tacitly refers to this when she describes Hindley as 'the peroxide icon of this unnatural species' of woman, a 'monster' whose 'aberration [...] defines, by inversion and excess, the lineaments of normality.'³⁰ Hindley and Brady also exemplify ways in which celebrity criminals are both objects of consumption *and* consuming subjects.³¹ This self-focus is evident in the way they took great pains to construct themselves as consumers and as criminals. Their self-constructed personae are then available for constructing further cultural projects and texts, which are then available, in turn, to others, to curate and construct their own brand. Hindley and Brady therefore become the product – the myth-commodity – by which others can engineer their own identities, just as they themselves used the celebrity killers available to them (such as kidnapper-murderers Leopold and Loeb, Irma Grese, the Marquis de Sade) and

²⁷ In comparison, Sutcliffe as criminal celebrity seems to be the opposite of Hindley and Brady – deliberately *not* curating himself as this kind of figure, and unwilling to take on its mantle when constructed as such by others.

²⁸ Lee, p.59.

²⁹ Helen Birch, 'If Looks Could Kill: Myra Hindley and the Iconography of Evil', *Moving Targets: Women, Murder and Representation* (London: Virago, 1993), pp. 33-61, pp.30-2.

³⁰ Marina Warner, 'Peroxide Mug-Shot', *London Review of Books* (20.1, 1998), pp. 10-11.

³¹ As Lasch has pointed out, consumerism takes on the form of a consumption-oriented narcissism. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979).

in turn become part of a canon or lexicon of murder fame. Yet if celebrity criminals have been used to construct identities and ideas, what these figures have been used to say has changed over time, reflecting and shaping the current anxieties and fascinations of the time. For example, in the Moors Murders myth, resonances of class and region in the 1960s were diluted, reshaped, and given new inflection by those of rebellion (1970s), sexual morality and serial killer panic (1980s), paedophile panic (1990s) and the shallowness of celebrity (2000s).

This theme of working-class consumption was neither so directly nor straightforwardly foregrounded regarding the 'Yorkshire Ripper' case – or, rather, it appeared in terms of the consumption *of* working-class people *as* commodities, rather than the consumption of material commodities *by* working-class people. The decade's cover-ups, political, colonial and police violence and corruption, gendered (also aged and raced) sexual violence, struggles for workers' rights, unions, miners, strikes, 'the enemy within',³² moral conservatisms (Lord Longford's campaign giving him the nickname 'Lord Porn' in this context) acted as a backdrop of brutal reification and the commodification of bodies and lives against which the case appeared to both typify and elide these issues. Most especially, consumption is figured as the commodification of sex, with police using women's leisure and consumption patterns – pub visits, dancing, alcohol, clothing – as arbitrary indicators of sex work. At the heart of the preoccupation with consumption in the 'Yorkshire Ripper' investigation was a narrow and brutal curtailing of acceptable feminine behaviour, rather than the anxiety of affluence so permeating the 'Moors Murders' case.

³² Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (4th New Upd edition. London: Verso, 2014).

As Louise Wattis explains, the 'Yorkshire Ripper' case was an 'iconic criminal event' which not only created a climate of fear for women, but also developed a 'general cultural resonance for both local communities and more widely'.³³ Sutcliffe's crimes and their representations foregrounded tensions about gender and (regionally inflected) class. As Joan Smith argues, it

brought ideas about men and women into focus. The murders seemed [...] a pure manifestation of misogyny, a consequence [...] of the suspicion and dislike for women [...] all around me. Peter Sutcliffe's hatred of women was extreme but it wasn't unique, which was one of the reasons [...] the police had such trouble catching him. They thought he would stand out and I thought exactly the opposite: that he could hide [...] easily in a culture which often displayed casual contempt for women.³⁴

In a parallel discourse, feminist theorists in the United States were developing the concept of 'rape culture', first coined in 1974, to describe the way in which (as later summarised by Sharna Olfman) the Western US-dominated global anglosphere is a 'culture in which rape is pervasive, prevalent, and normalized through societal attitudes about gender, sex and sexuality.' As she argues,

There is a great deal of research to support this claim [... but] most women understand what it means to live in a rape culture because of their lived reality of doing so. When I ask men what they do in their day-to-day lives to protect themselves from being sexually violated, most just stare silently. [...] When I ask women [this ...] they offer a long list of actions and thought processes [; e]very action of women within a rape culture is tainted by that culture. Going to get their mail, driving to work, going out with friends – none of these actions are "free". [...] regardless of how many women experience a rape or attempted rape within their

³³ Wattis, pp.2-3, drawing on Caputi; Smith; Nicole Rafter, 'Crime, film and criminology: Recent sex-crime movies', *Theoretical Criminology* August 2007 vol. 11 no. 3 403-420; Jalna Hanmer and Sheila Saunders *Well Founded Fear: a community study of violence to women* (London: Hutchinson, 1984); Julie Bindel, 'Terror on our streets', *The Guardian*, 13 December 2006; Nicola Upson, '(Dis)locations: Post-Industrial Gothic in David Peace's Red Riding Quartet', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Sep 22, 2012.

³⁴ Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989; this edition London: Westbourne, 2013), p.1. See also Blake Morrison, *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper*, in which the narrator explicitly links the ordinary attitudes of the men around him to those of the 'Ripper': 'mi mates [h]ate women | and [...] Pete med em die'. Blake Morrison, *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), p.24.

lifetime, 100 percent of women experience that *threat* of rape within a rape culture. This means that *all* women's lives are impacted [by it].³⁵

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this is staged in David Peace's 'Red Riding' quadrilogy of novels and their subsequent dramatisation. As many feminist cultural commentators have pointed out, Sutcliffe's temporo-spatial environment was a climate of overlapping and competing misogyny, feminist resistance, and anti-feminist backlash. Smith extrapolates: 'I hadn't heard the phrase "conducive context" in those days, but I wanted to write about the assumptions which allowed someone like Sutcliffe [to kill]'.³⁶ Blake Morrison dramatises this sentiment as the voice of women in Yorkshire at the time in his poem *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper*, that they

jeered at lads in porn shops,
an scrawled stuff in pub Gents [toilets]
like 'Ripper's not a psychopath
But every men in pants.
All you blokes would kill like him
given half a chance.

'Listen to your beer-talk –
"hammer", "poke" and "screw"
"bang" and "score" and "lay" us:
that's what the Ripper does too.'³⁷

Lisa Downing summarises this publically disavowed overlap between killer and culture more broadly:

From a feminist critical viewpoint [...] the figure of the killer [...] is not out of the ordinary at all—he is merely an exaggeration, or the extreme logical endpoint, of

³⁵ Sharna Olfman, *The Sexualization of Childhood* (Praeger, Westport, 2009), p. 9.

³⁶ See Smith; Wattis; Caputi; Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer, *The Lust To Kill: A Feminist Investigation of Serial Murder* (Polity Press, Oxford, 1987); Una, *Becoming Unbecoming* (Brighton, UK: Myriad Editions, 2015); Mark Ensalcado, 'Murder in Ciudad Juarez: A parable of women's struggle for human rights', *Violence Against Women*, 12: 5, 2006, pp. 417-440. There is much feminist commentary on Hindley and on Sutcliffe, but very little on Brady alone.

³⁷ Morrison, pp.30-1.

masculine patriarchal domination, and his othering as “different” serves to exculpate less extravagant exhibitions of misogyny.³⁸

This need to project unpalatable yet widely-accepted social attitudes onto the othered killer is a tendency integral to the cultural myth-making to which Sutcliffe has been subject, both at the time of his crimes and subsequently.

In a differently inflected way, the decade of the 1970s was as much an emblematically Northern working-class cultural moment as the 1960s. Between the times of these two cases, a hinge of class struggle emerged, joining the two eras. The Moors Murders’s was centred around New Wave, Merseybeat and the ‘Angry Young Man’ literary wave – as Lee suggests, Hindley and Brady’s ‘crimes occurred in the working-class North at a time when it was the geographical focus of contemporary books, films and theatre’.³⁹ The Ripper case’s imaginative centre was industrial action, organised workers pitted against government, class war, economic downturn and a racialised, radicalised Celtic underclass. Class struggle was the other defining feature of the period: a struggle multiply inflected with colonial, racial and regional fault lines; Dominic Sandbrook contends, ‘The decline and fall of working-class Britain was one of the most common themes of cultural life in the 1970s.’⁴⁰ In his popular-historical account of the 1970s, Sandbrook uses Sutcliffe’s crimes as a springboard to discuss crime, fear, identity and place, and as a cultural touchpoint in his description of Wigan Casino. Despite claiming ‘there was nothing intrinsically Northern’ and indeed, according to him, nothing intrinsically ‘70s either ‘about Peter Sutcliffe’s murders’, Sandbrook’s verbal sketches provide a perfect example of how these figures are used as

³⁸ Lisa Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, And The Modern Killer* (Chicago: UP, 2013), p.2.

³⁹ Lee, p.368; p.22.

⁴⁰ Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), p.25.

convenient encapsulations of the resonances of issues and objects well beyond their crimes.⁴¹

Other commentators have argued more explicitly that the changes underway in the '70s may also have led to a society in which conditions for serial killing were more likely to be met. Wattis contends that the emergence at this time of

Neo-liberal economies [...] created widening social inequalities, individualism and a decline in collective social life [...] all of which create marginality and vulnerability and are integral to potential victimhood.⁴²

As Sandbrook suggests, fear of crime and perceptions of decline abounded at this time.

Key developments in relations between these cases and the social conditions of the 1970s are evident in the birth of Punk and related social and musical movements. For S Reid Alexander and Jon Savage, Punk emerged from an especially broken, mistrustful society whose values were in flux, and a backlash to permissive social changes of the '60s was underway.⁴³ The 1970s also constituted the immediate reception period for the first representations of Hindley and Brady. Therefore, the cultural valences of these early representations, and the first wave of musical and visual responses to 1960s accounts and media reports of the case set the tone for Hindley's later visual-cultural afterlife and her unmooring from the immediate context of her crimes, thus enabling her iconicity. 1960s' representations made her affluenza's 'dolly bird', the bleach blonde haunting the supermarkets of modernity, but the 1970s made her punk's nihilistic anti-

⁴¹ Ibid., p.391.

Sandbrook is criticising Peace's fictionalising of the case; he places himself in opposition to Peace's fusion of these elements and argument that '[it wasn't] the Cornish Ripper [...] It was the Yorkshire Ripper - it happened at this time and in this place, and I don't think it's by chance.' Nick Hasted, 'The Shadow of the Ripper: David Peace tells Nick Hasted how Peter Sutcliffe followed him from Yorkshire and into his novels', *The Guardian*, 2nd of August 2001).

⁴² Wattis, p.9.

⁴³ Reed, S. Alexander. *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013; Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

femininity pin-up of rebellion. In the cultural conflict over expression, sexuality and 'public decency', Hindley and Brady came to represent the refusal to bow to official morals. Simon Ford describes Edward Heath's 1970 defeat of the Labour government as both reflecting and prompting a resurgence in the 'moral Right', leading to a 'crack-down on permissiveness', highlighting Lord Longford's identification of a 'watershed' moment at which 'All sorts of people, not only those with a religious standpoint, began to say for the first time, "things have gone too far".'⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter Three, the weather front between 'permissiveness' and a restrictive cultural mood resulted in Punk receiving very negative press attention, creating a connection between Punk's perception of its own media trials and those of Hindley, which it used as an emblem for distrust of media narratives and official histories. It was into this highly-contested atmosphere of celebrity criminals as vehicles for rebellion and self-expression that pop-cultural representations of Sutcliffe were born.

Hindley's custodial photograph, taken in 1966, entered cultural circulation in a way that Brady's, despite frequent publication both alongside hers and alone, did not. Hindley's became a symbol, not merely for her and her lover's crimes, not even simply as a cipher for radical evil, but also as a time capsule of a social, regional and cultural milieu that later commentators could evoke with a minimal visual gesture towards the Moors Murders myth. The proliferation and recirculation of representations of Hindley has increased over the decades as she has slipped from the forefront of memory into myth – and in turn, new representations have inspired and provoked yet further

⁴⁴ Lord Longford, *Pornography: the Longford Report* (1972), Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle* (Black Dog Publishing, London, 1999) p.2.3 [sic]. This biography was named after a phrase used by Conservative MP Nicholas Fairbairn as a term of opprobrium for the band in 1976, which gives an indication of the clash of values between the 'moral right' and the kind of music discussed in Chapter Three.

representations. As Lizzie Seal summarises,

Hindley[’s ...] iconic status [...] did not dissipate with her death in 2002. She has been portrayed on the stage, in pop songs, television [and] artworks, and [has been] a focus for press attention throughout her life and after her death.⁴⁵

She was also depicted in film, promotional materials and advertising, both digital and physical-media ‘fan’ art and products proliferate, from t-shirts to jewellery to paper dolls to cross stitch and even jam. In contrast Brady’s visual brand only emerges since Hindley’s death or as part of a matching set alongside her.

Brady’s previous absence from discussion of the visual resonance of the Moors Murders myth – as opposed to the intellectual and philosophical contexts in which he has more traditionally been placed – is typical of a gendered split between women as immanent, men as transcendent; men as subjects, women as objects; men as for being, women for being looked at.⁴⁶ In Brady’s case this is exacerbated by continual connection to his opposite number: the female other, the surface to his depths; despite Brady’s responsibility for setting the style and tone of their self-presentation as much as their philosophy. He has been portrayed as the power behind the throne, while she has been the figurehead – nothing *but* visible – while he is invisibly present. His continued liminal incarcerated state has been one of a continual absent presence, a life-in-death as mad/sane, criminal/patient, always there but always not-there, nowhere and everywhere – as finally elusive (and problematically elegiac) as the undisclosed whereabouts of some of his victim’s graves.

Consequently Brady’s visuality, physicality and socio-cultural specificity within an

⁴⁵ Seal, p. 89.

⁴⁶ Downing, p.2.

enmeshed, intersectional system of power relations have been downplayed and ignored, both in direct representations of the couple and in discussion surrounding such representations. Or, rather perhaps, there has been a disingenuous desire in many primary representations to convey these aspects of him (as a figure) whilst maintaining an ostentatious distance from appearing to do so.⁴⁷ The lack of resonance and power, of representation and re-circulation, of *his* original custodial photograph, means that unlike Hindley he has been allowed to age, has been allowed to remain unfixed in history.⁴⁸

Although to a far lesser extent than Hindley, Sutcliffe's image has also been re-circulated and become an icon. His facial hair and eyes were made much of by commentators as significant to his identity, making them available to later representations. Providing an easy iconicity they act as instant signifiers of his myth, which yokes ideas of essential 'evil' to mid-century Yorkshire. His press soubriquet, 'the *Yorkshire* Ripper', regionally others his particular crimes and his public persona, rendering his a shadow narrative of a spatially-normative Ripper; i.e. as a Northern version of a Southern Ripper, whose modifier might be something other than place. Brady, in contrast, largely absent from cultural re-presentation in a way that his partner in crime was not, is somehow non-corporal: a power relation, a mind, the archetypal normative invisible white male presence that observes rather than being observed.

These are all also detachable signifiers as demonstrated by Hindley and Sutcliffe's visual

⁴⁷ See Chapters One and Two for how this tendency works in terms of true crime's generic reliance of the showing of *not showing*, and its creation of a spectacle of the lack.

⁴⁸ A case in point is the way in which the lack of photography of Brady, particularly as a known public image, led *the Sun* to produce a mock-up of his aged face from his original mugshot, while various papers made use of court drawings of him in lieu of photographs.

recirculation: crucially, the unmooring of physical, social and geographical traits enables their deployment in other contexts, to make points beyond their crimes and personas.

Despite Brady's not having been aesthetically visible until recently, his image still becomes available as a floating visual signifier, within a cultural economy of celebrity murderers. A review of Neil McKay's two-part TV drama *See No Evil* (Christopher Menaul, 2006) comments on Brady's 'merciless fishmouth',⁴⁹ while Stuart Maconie describes him and Hindley in specifically news-media-intertext-inflected terms:

'the bogeyman's two faces stared at you out of the newspapers, hair full of peroxide and brilliantine; eyes full of pure and pitiless evil'.⁵⁰

True crime and accounts of real-life criminal activities and figures are ubiquitous in the media, constituting both an illustrative backdrop and a rolling set of interventions in this project. This thesis investigates the broader terrain of this phenomenon by examining media (written, audio-visual and musical representations) spanning the immediate aftermath of the crimes until the present day, with particular focus on the construction of gender and Northern-ness in true crime. To this end I regarded representations of Moors Murders and Yorkshire Ripper cases as their own subgenres, each comprising corpuses that could be deployed as case studies for thinking firstly about true crime and criminal celebrity and, secondly, about Northern-ness and Northern celebrity, as constructed artifacts.

The remainder of this introduction outlines existing work on, and my intervention into, the construction of the othered Northern body, particularly the Northern masculine body, in popular culture, and how it relates to these figures. Additionally, it provides an

⁴⁹ Arbogast, 'Evil beyond belief' *Arbogast On Film*, January the 25th 2008. [<http://arbogastonfilm.blogspot.co.uk/2008/01/loathsome-couple.html?zx=8514c2e873a19ae5>] [ACCESSED 17/09/15]

⁵⁰ Stuart Maconie, *Pies and Prejudice: In Search of the North* (Bodmin: Ebury, 2007), p. 191.

overview of the immediate socio-temporal context of the cases and their reception, and of the different eras of their subsequent representational trends, interrogating the meaning and uses of constructs of Northern-ness in relation to these contexts.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is strongly influenced by David Schmid's *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture* (2005) and Lisa Downing's *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, And The Modern Killer* (2013). Both are essential to the analysis of serial killers as cultural phenomena. Schmid establishes the figure of the celebrity killer as a commodity, embedded within a commodity culture, in a process of continual exchange that acts as a site of conflicting meaning. He proposes the proliferation of this figure through a process called 'multiaccentuality', whereby the killer accrues celebrity, then their image is adopted, used and adapted by a variety of divergent and conflicting groups and people, to mean a variety of different things, in a manner which exacerbates itself, spreading their use to a yet broader and more divergent range of people and meanings.⁵¹

This thesis applies these historical and theoretical modes of understanding to a specific body of texts emerging from, and establishing, the celebrity of the Moors Murderers and Yorkshire Ripper. This tight focus is the kernel of the difference between my research and Schmid's. Firstly, his purview is the whole of American celebrity murder culture, and, within this, the factors and conditions that enabled serial killer culture to first come into being. My project focuses on a comparatively small range of British cultural artefacts depicting these three British murderers. Secondly, because the research I

⁵¹ Schmid, 2005, p.6.

conduct in this thesis is more directly textual, it provides less of a comprehensive historical/cultural overview. This thesis also does not concern itself with the development of fame as a cultural phenomenon and process, or how policing attitudes and policies have created and responded to the figure of the serial killer, or with ways changes in detection as a system have influenced true crime and related representational forms. Likewise, I am not engaged in historicising true crime's constructions of the killer as insider/outsider to be either rehabilitated into or expelled from the community (as Schmid does). Ultimately, this project, unlike Schmid's, is less interested in the celebrity serial killer as the 'exemplary modern celebrity' whose fame is key to understanding both the cultural work that killers do and that done by celebrities in general. Instead, I examine these celebrity killers as exemplars of specifically Northern celebrity, and record and analyse the textual traces that have created them as such through the construction of a canon of tropes of concrete detail, establishing an iconography of their temporal and class-based milieu. The aesthetics of murder, for this thesis, are not the aesthetics of either fame or a 'quality' of crime or of artistic representations of it,⁵² but rather of the physical iconographies emerging from and brought to bear upon *these particular cases*, as *genres unto themselves*.

Downing's *The Subject of Murder* is a study of the construction of the figure of the murderer in nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first-century European and American culture and establishes, through a series of case studies centring around different killers, the concept of 'exceptionality' as a means of analysing the murderer as an othered repository of cultural fantasy and meaning. Her thesis is that murderers are treated as

⁵² As Schmid discusses in his assessment of Pearson and his reliance on the influence of De Quincey in 'True Crime'. Schmid, 'True Crime', *A Companion to Crime Fiction*. Ed. Charles Rzepka and Lee Horsley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), pp198-210.

different from the ordinary citizen, as special individuals, like artists or geniuses: elite celebrities with a rarified level of social capital. She argues that killers, in being treated as exceptional subjects, are both neutralised as a source of anxiety by their separateness, and also fetishised as the epitome of neoliberalism's ideal individualised subject.

Downing asserts that such discourses 'silence gender-aware, class-based analyses about murder', and attempt to solidify and maintain the division between 'which category of person (male) may "legitimately" occupy the role of killer, and which category of person (female) is more generally relegated to the role of victim in our culture', and that we as researchers must attend all the more closely to these issues in response.⁵³ This is a premise I wholeheartedly take on board as I focus on textual examples from a canon of accounts of these two specific cases. These demonstrate Downing's point, culturally positioning killers as legitimately and unremarkably male, and of legitimate maleness as adjoining, inflected by, of a kind with and in some ways ontologically reliant on, the figure of the killer. My textual analysis supports her theory, extending it not only to explore material that her book does not cover, but also, applying it to different kinds of class and gender signaling than those which she attends to – specifically to the class and masculinity signifiers of the constructed Northern-ness of these celebrity killers.

While I attend to different themes than these authors, different themes also emerge from the demands of examining this specific body of material. For example, the North is a large thematic part of the Yorkshire Ripper and Moors Murders myths and my analysis emerges organically from engagement with the material. Unlike both Schmid and Downing, my project does not formulate a broader theory of the modern subject, per se.

⁵³ Downing, pp.1-2.

Rather, my central concerns are the reification inherent to capitalism, how Northern-ness functions culturally in general, and how Northern killers function within a (commodified) culture of Northern-ness.

Other scholars whose work I have drawn upon, whilst also simultaneously departing significantly from, are Helen Birch, Helen Pleasance and Louise Wattis.⁵⁴ The points Birch raises (outlined in more detail below) about genre and landscape in Emlyn Williams's *Beyond Belief*, though peripheral to her study, are central to this thesis.⁵⁵ In terms of both Wattis and Pleasance, differing approaches result from both disciplinary differences and a wider focus. Specifically, I take a cultural studies approach while Wattis's is sociological and cultural criminologist and Pleasance's is a specifically literary study of life writing and creative writing; Wattis works solely on the Yorkshire Ripper and does not discuss the Moors Murders, while Pleasance's focus is exclusively on Hindley.

This thesis's key departure from existing research, then, will be the way in which it combines elements treated by Schmid, Downing and Birch, filling a gap at the intersection between time, space (especially the North), gender and sexuality,

⁵⁴ Birch, 1994; Wattis, 2015; Ibid., 'The Social Nature of Serial Murder' *European Journal of Women's Studies* (London: Sage, 2016); Helen Pleasance, 'Refusing the Gothic Return: History, Fiction and the Moors Murders, Or, What it means to know too much about Myra Hindley', *True Crime Fictions* Conference, The Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, 01 July 2016; Ibid., 'The Essential Subject? The Very Documented Life Of Myra Hindley', *Documents of Life Revisited: Narrative and Biographical Methodology for a 21st Century Critical Humanism*, ed. Liz Stanley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp.45-58; Ibid., 'Lost Children, the Moors & Evil Monsters: the photographic story of the Moors Murders', *Image and Narrative: The Story of Things* 12: 4 (Open Humanities Press, 2011), pp.18-38. [<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/issue/view/15>] [ACCESSED 09/10/14]; Ibid., 'It's the Photograph That Did It: An Attempt to Understand the Peculiar Cultural Presence of Myra Hindley', *History, Mystery and Myth* Conference, University of East Anglia, Norwich, Saturday 14th November 2009 (abstract only), [<https://historymysteryandmythatuea.wordpress.com/about/abstracts>] [ACCESSED 09/10/14].

⁵⁵ Whilst these were key starting points for my thinking about cultural representations of the moors murders, Birch does not develop them as fully as she might, as a result of her tight focus on a straightforward gender analysis of Hindley's representation.

consumption and cross-genre intertextuality. I delineate a topography of murder within the cultural geography of what I term 'Northientalism' (an original concept I gloss below) and across a broad and contrasting range of generic traditions. In particular, when theorists do approach this combination of areas, they tend to do so in relation either solely to Hindley or solely to Sutcliffe. In most instances gender is their key structuring concern, particularly in terms of Hindley's aberrant embodiment of femininity and of Sutcliffe's aberrantly normal destruction of it. By initiating a comparison *between* these figures, I bring into focus such representations' negotiation of, and contribution to, a complex web of signification involving criminality, masculinity and Northern-ness, and reveal the subversive tensions that continue to underscore cultural representations of all these. My thesis's central areas of interest, therefore, in examining celebrity murderers, are in fact the North, masculinity, physical detail, and reification – amounting, ultimately, to an embodied reading of capitalism's inherent harm.

Northientalism

The figure of the Northern killer is the product of certain cultural ideas of gender within class and geographical space. It is just one example of gendered classist regional discourses from the '60s to the present day; a study tracing the same relations using sportspeople or actors or musicians would reach broadly similar conclusions. Violence, however, brings about a crisis point of reflection on specific cultural constructions and throws them into high relief, focusing and amplifying anxieties that may also be present around other kinds of gendered or class-inflected discourses. The consumption of two differently yet overlappingly othered groups (in this case killers and 'Northerners'), operating within and through the representation of time and place, constitute the crux

of my work.

An important premise for this thesis therefore, is that the cultural imaginary of 'The North' of England and Britain is constructed according to specific stereotyped class and gender assumptions, and located in certain aesthetics. As this thesis goes on to argue, true crime as a genre is reliant on, firstly, the material aesthetics of space: landscape, architecture, domestic furnishings, consumer goods, cultural artefacts, leisure, and secondly, the material aesthetics of the body: race, gender, physique, fashion, self-presentation. These are also paramount to the specifically Northern othering of primarily working-class people, which, in this thesis, I term 'Northientalism'. As a theoretical construct it draws on Edward Said's crucial re-conception of Orientalism as the West's shaping and reinforcing of its power relations with a generalised, totalised East through a raft of tropes in cultural representations.⁵⁶ He describes a subtle and pervasive long-standing process whereby Eurocentric, simplified and denigratory repeated representations, which employ an exoticising, commodifying gaze, replace more nuanced engagements with different Eastern cultures, overwriting and constricting Eastern self-presentation. Thus, for the West, these external and visual, touristic stereotypes are enforced and developed through images in Western cultural artefacts in which Eastern voices are absent or co-opted.⁵⁷

Without wishing to trivialise or appropriate from an analysis of specifically racialised international imperial power and violence, this model has much to impart to those considering the intra-national power relations between the (broadly and ambiguously defined) North and (incompletely conceptualised in popular discourse) South. I would

⁵⁶ Edward Said, *Oreintalism* (New York, Routledge: 1978)

⁵⁷ Ibid; John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2011).

posit that between these imagined spaces there exists a set of quasi-postcolonial relations (a sub-empire within an empire) in which citizens of the North have historically been ignored, written over, made use of, and treated as a resource, by the London-centric – and South-East-centric – loci of national economic, governmental, media, and cultural power. A Northientalist analysis has the potential to be more nuanced than classism as a concept, but still draws heavily upon it due to the cultural perception of the North as ‘the land of the working-classes’,⁵⁸ viewed touristically by the South as a sort of working-class theme park.⁵⁹

Northientalism is also intrinsically a racially inflected discourse. Firstly, the stereotypical Northerner is imagined as white, and this exclusion is entangled in the longstanding and continuing racist construct within Western society of whiteness as superior, unmarked, invisible, intellectual, transcendent and incorporeal.⁶⁰ Secondly, while the archetype of the Northerner is traditionally always white (though in the 21st century other Northern stereotypes emerge to sit alongside it) there remains a faint sense of a differently inflected whiteness coded onto white Northern subjects, as part of the continuing process of racial stratification of hierarchical whiteness. In a true crime context, Jean Murley argues (discussing American true crime) that from the genre’s earliest inception it has been characterised by its

complete refusal to register the significant racial conflict in [...] society or the racial components of crime. In fact, [...] one would think the country was uniformly white. That certain types of [extremely significant] crimes [...] were ignored in contemporary true crime] – racially motivated lynchings in the 1920s and 1930s for example – [...] highlights the genre’s] focus on white perpetrators,

⁵⁸ Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell, ‘Introduction’ *Sporting Heroes Of The North: Sport, Religion and Culture* (Northumbria Press, Newcastle, 2010) p.x.

⁵⁹ Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, ‘Privileging the Male Gaze’, *Annals of Tourism Research* 27:4 (2000), p. 884–905.

⁶⁰ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

and the construction of a white readership interested solely in crimes perpetrated by other whites, marks the beginning of a long-standing convention not just in the magazines, but in true crime generally, which would continue throughout the twentieth century in various media forms [... and] is at odds with statistical reality, where in 2006 African Americans made up 12.5 percent of the total United States population, but 49.5 percent of its murder victims.⁶¹

Murley's points are applicable beyond an American context. It must also be noted that true crime is a genre of writing that is not only aimed at 'an imagined white [...] readership', overlooking other readers as a result, but also one that presents an 'imagined [...] all-white world'.⁶² The whiteness of the particular cases this thesis examines – of their imaginary spaces, and thus of the genres their representations became – is just such a construction and untruth: neither Manchester in the 1960s nor the Leeds-Bradford area in the 1970s were homogeneously white monocultures. Part of what the cases' imaginaries offer is an apparently pre- or non-multicultural England.

Consequently, there is an ambiguity and a danger in placing The North into an imperial context: a construct that only exists internationally, and which has predominantly been the instrument of oppression of people of colour. Yet there is considerable overlap, for example, between normative Southern stereotypes of the Irish and Northerners — as an ethnic group and also as inhabitants of social and geographical realities. Obviously kinship patterns and population movement mean that this is unsurprising because the same people have often settled in both places, moved between one and the other, and occupied similar positions of exploitation and exoticism in normative representation – but this also indicates the reuse of well-worn discourses as a catch-all means of

⁶¹ Jean Murley, *The Rise of True Crime: 20th Century Murder and American Popular Culture*. (Westport: Praeger, 2008), p.10. This statistic does not include 'legitimate' – typically institutionally racist – forms of state murder, such as death at the hands of police, in prison, in war, or other socially-accepted or judicial killings – much less premature deaths and shortened lifespans resulting from healthcare and welfare disparities, endemic poverty, etc.

⁶² Ibid., p.16-17.

maintaining power. In terms of being othered by the normatively central regions of England, this is in part projected onto ideas of bodily difference (the bullying of ‘ginger’ people is one obvious example) which is a form of ‘colonial gaze’, as Said and E. Ann Kaplan term it.⁶³ The term ‘Northern monkey’ is a multivalent everyday expression, constituting abusive epithet, affectionate self-designation, and even providing the source for the names of an eponymous chain of theme pubs and Sheffield indie band Arctic Monkeys. All of these resonances underline the fact that a dehumanising racialised white-but-not-quite-ness is still today a strand of Northientalism, allowing an ambiguous(ly commodified) subaltern pride in such a construct.

These criminal cases occurred at a moment of historical bottleneck between the North as racialised as inferior and the North as a region of unmarked whiteness. This process coincided with, helped bring about, and was also simultaneously ushered into being by the emergence of the North’s moment of cultural vogue in the 1960s – Mersey Beat, the British New Wave, the ‘Angry Young Man’ movement, and early Northern Soul, which came into its own in the 1970s.⁶⁴ This series of Northern cultural moments at the heart of postwar popular culture also came about at a time of specific heightened class and race tensions in the UK. Of particular resonance for the North was the sharp focus thrown on the colonial occupation of Ireland by England, and the colonialisation of policing. This in turn resulted in, and accrued from, the tendency of both elite and popular attitudes on the mainland to project an inter- and intranational inferior Otherness onto Irish and Irish-descended communities (of which there were many in

⁶³ Ann E. Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁴ Such a moment is also mirrored by early Britpop emerging out of ‘Madchester’, a post-Smiths legacy, baggy, rave and even Factory records, alongside Pulp in the musical cultural terrain of the 1990s (see Chapter Three).

the North of England) whose racialisation had long been closely aligned with constructions of Celtic otherness. This shift was not only an inadvertent outgrowth of consequences of Britain's colonial brutality, *but also* a specific way of policing domestic class unrest that was now emerging due to the material, political and economic conditions of the day.

While it should be clear that it is only in certain contexts that Northientalism is in operation or foregrounded (for example, a white man who is the object of one othering discourse is simultaneously the invisible normative subject of another), any group which is outside of, and constructed in contrast to, the normative centre will be made aware of their own (perceived) lack of fit with that centre and of both their availability to, and the exact stereotyped constraints of, their appearance in a normative othering gaze. The modifier becomes the exclusion and the mark of difference; as Russell argues, 'film set in the South is just "film" [...] [whereas] northern film always arouses certain expectations'.⁶⁵ Northern working-class characters are seen as more indelibly linked to Northern performers, and to one another, than middle-class Southern ones; the latter are normatively unmarked, whereas the former constitute an overall 'type'. Northientalism has by reflection, then, useful things to contribute to a broader discussion of English postcolonial relations, and indeed, seems strangely topical, in the late-capitalist 21st century, in which it is becoming apparent that without an empire Britain is finding that its oppression never was purely extra-national, and that despite their privilege as non-colonial citizens of the 'home' nation, the working-class (of any ethnic background) are still, and have always been, treated as a limitless resource by elites.

⁶⁵ Russell, p. 181.

Gothic Soap Opera: Northern Space and the Unmooring of the Moors

There are certain specific recurring types of spaces – both interior and exterior – associated with these crimes. While these associations are, anchored to the locations in which the criminal activity occurred, through their representation they become, and feed into, imaginaries of the real places. The importance of the location in these two cases for defining the meaning of the figures involved is not merely the result of a tendency to append the district to the mode of crime in press appellations (e.g. ‘Boston Strangler’, ‘Ipswich Murders’); it is also made possible by the ready availability of long-standing discourses about these locations (both specifically, and, generally as a representative stand-in for the North as a whole) and the types of people represented as belonging there – their bodies, their accents, their place within society – that replicate and engage with existing cultural myths pertaining to these locations and traits.

The ‘Moors Murderers’, as the name implies, carry not only the Saddleworth moors within their story and their image, but also all moors. Their myth has entered into the cultural imaginary of what a moor is. Along with smugglers (e.g. *Jamaica Inn*) highwaymen, escaped convicts (*Great Expectations*), fairies and banshees, dangerous bogs, sinister wild creatures of possible supernatural or crypto-zoological origin (from ‘The Beast of Bodmin’ to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*), they joined a canon of moorland mythology that embraced the Gothic elements of the case, and whose existence prior to it gave media and commentators a rich seam of implicit sensation(alism) and outsidersness to draw on. As Lee remarks,

The moors hold a distinct resonance in British literature and folklore, invoking the girl who is frightened of the brooding landscape in Myra Hindley’s favourite

book, *The Secret Garden*; Dewer, the huntsman in *The House of the Baskervilles*, throwing a bag to a man walking on the moor, who finds the body of his own child inside; and the ghost of young Cathy Earnshaw scratching wretchedly at the window in *Wuthering Heights*.⁶⁶

Indeed, she describes Hindley and Brady as ‘a demon Cathy and Heathcliffe’ as well as reminiscent of the evildoers of fairytales.⁶⁷ Judge Gerald Sparrow remarked in one of his accounts of the case, ‘Shakespeare himself could not have chosen a lonelier or more terrifying place than Saddleworth Moor’.⁶⁸

According to Angela Bourke, moors in cultural representations function as ‘metaphors for areas of silence and circumvention in the social life of the communities which tell stories about them. They are places out of place; their time is out of time’ – a locus of loss.⁶⁹ Yet the image of the moors (and of rural, wild, non-human space) is, particularly in the British New Wave, one of (a limited and contained) freedom, especially for working-class characters within the Northern. This illusory freedom, of exceptionality and outsidership, at this great height, from the apparently small concerns of society’s bourgeois expectations is emphasised repeatedly in accounts of Brady’s relationship with moorland and mountainous landscape.⁷⁰ Penfold-Mounce describes the geographical locations of famous crimes as ‘spectacles for [...] consumers seeking

⁶⁶ Lee, p.368.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 368-9.

⁶⁸ Judge Gerald Sparrow, *Queens of Crime: Stories of Great Woman Criminals* (London: Arthur Barker, 1973), p.27.

⁶⁹ Angela Bourke, ‘Reading a Woman’s Death’, *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 432-457, p.444.

⁷⁰ This may in part explain Williams’s repeated comparisons between Brady and Harry Lime: the image of Lime standing on the big wheel looking down at Vienna, declaiming, through Orson Welles’ improvisation, about the pettiness of the lives below and his impunity in harming any of them is strikingly similar to our image of Brady atop his crag, imagining himself above the ‘little people in little houses like maggots small blind and worthless’. Lyric by Manic Street Preachers, ‘Of Walking Abortion’, based on passages written by David Smith under the direction of Brady, intended to summarise his understanding of the philosophies of the Marquis de Sade.

locations in a similar way to tourists visiting local heritage sights or beauty spots.’⁷¹ Hindley and Brady were just such tourists experiencing and consuming the Moors as ‘beauty spots’; yet crimes re-inscribing the meaning of the moors, perpetually linking their own meanings to them, is the only thing making them insiders of this landscape rather than urban outsiders. The iconography of not only Hindley and Brady’s myth but Sutcliffe’s too is, as Birch neatly summarises, that of ‘a kind of Gothic soap opera’ defined by ‘the congruence of grimy backstreets, moors swathed in mist’.⁷²

This congruence (even confluence) of urban and rural, crowded and empty is significant. It is not simply that the myth contains moors, but that it contains and juxtaposes the wild and the domestic, rather than simply emphasising one or the other, in the same way that the contrast and impure mingling of the killer and the domestic is part of the frisson of true crime – a theme I develop in Chapter One. This term ‘Gothic soap opera’ – with the latter’s connotations of class, banality, safe-and-boring home life, etc. – relies on an apparent tension and contrast between the two generic modes – the quotidian and the supernatural; just such an habitual grouping of the working-class in their marginal yet familiar spaces with the prosaic and the quotidian, versus the association of the exotic aristocrats of some imagined foreign land with the supernatural, which fulfil the genre conventions of the Gothic.

Thus, ‘Gothic soap opera’ accurately and precisely captures the exact overlapping point of genres found in true crime and the true crime of these cases particularly. The landscape is presented as wild (undomestic) but also industrial, a workplace

⁷¹ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, ed. *Celebrity Culture and Crime: The Joy of Transgression* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p.29.

⁷² Birch, p.33-4; See also Lee’s linking of Hindley to literary evocation of place: Lee pp. 42-3; 368-9; p.386.

(undomestic) – yet is juxtaposed with a kind of unhomely domestic and an alienated urban jungle. As I demonstrate in Chapter One, these themes are at the forefront of Emlyn Williams’s myth-setting depiction of the ‘Moors’ case in his 1967 non-fiction novel *Beyond Belief*. Such valences echo the animalising of Northern subjects as a classed group: treated as a raw material, tameable, out there waiting to be used, like land, which the upper classes perceive themselves to have a patrician duty to ‘cultivate’ or ‘civilise’: to make use of them lest they go wild. This sense of the potential of working-class people to run amok and embrace ‘barbarism’ was a clear strand of 1960s conservatism and declinist fears.⁷³ Juxtaposing and mingling generic elements of New Wave, kitchen sink drama, tabloid and soap opera with Dracula, otherworldly beings and supernaturally-inflected moorland in its opening passage, Williams embeds a cultural intertext of murder and peril into his account from the first page. His list of leisure attractions leading up to Dracula’s gore-soaked coffin on a film poster functions as an emblem for fear and excitement accruing to mass culture’s supposedly corrupting effects, a set of emotions that the ‘Moors Murders’ came to symbolise in contemporary commentary.

Sutcliffe was similarly perceived in Gothic terms, his press nickname, ‘The Yorkshire Ripper’, firstly placing London as the normative centre and the North as an Other that must be treated as different, and secondly conflating his crimes not only with a specific place, time and look, but also into a natural feature of the location, at once vague and threatening, like a plague or fog: something that is everywhere and nowhere, within the Ridings. Finally, it imposed a Gothic and a gender and sex-work related template onto the crimes in a way that not only inflected their representational meaning but was in fact a key factor in their continuation: the police were unable to catch Sutcliffe because,

⁷³ Anita Biressi, *Crime, Fear, and the Law in True Crime Stories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp.67-72, p.67.

as Smith contends, they had convinced themselves they were looking for a phantom reincarnation of Jack the Ripper.⁷⁴ Sandbrook argues it was not until the death of Emily Jackson (the second murder victim, following three previous non-fatal assaults) that police and the press posited sex work as a link between victims and so created his myth as Ripper reincarnate: 'On January 1976, the *Sun* ran the headline "Ripper Hunted in Call-Girl Murders", coining the nickname for which Sutcliffe became famous.'⁷⁵ Smith explains this outcome:

It was at this point in the case – not after the three assaults, but when two murders had been committed – that someone thought they'd discerned a pattern. On the very day Mrs Jackson's body was found, West Yorkshire Police telexed all their own divisions and neighbouring forces, giving details of Mrs Jackson's murder. She was, it said, an "active prostitute": her killer "may also have been responsible for the death of the prostitute Wilma McCann at Leeds". The motive, it continued, 'appears to be hatred of prostitutes.' Two days later the national papers added their own interpretation: a "Jack the Ripper Killer" was on the loose.⁷⁶

The linking of the 'Yorkshire Ripper' and 'Jack the Ripper' myths was a consequence of the West Yorkshire Police's 'assigning characteristics to the man they [we]re looking for – to make him into an acquaintance, [and so ...] a real person [... to] themselves and to the press'.⁷⁷ Throughout the case they had already amongst themselves designated him thus:

Two Ripper Squad detectives [...] described [in an interview with the Sunday Mirror, 4th Nov 1979] how they and their colleagues discussed the case constantly in their breaks and at the police club bar, referring to the killer as 'Jack', 'the lad', or 'chummy'.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ As Smith points out, 'Jack the Ripper is not a person but a *label* connecting a set of related acts'. The myth had material and deadly consequences: it made Sutcliffe actually harder to catch, and at the same time more frightening for people to live through the social and media climate surrounding his attacks. The police's misdirected focus was a consequence of (and exacerbated) the depicting of killers as exceptional, transcendent, Other: 'if you [are chasing ...] shadows, you are not likely to come up with a lorry driver from Bradford.' Smith, pp.163-4.

⁷⁵ Sandbrook, p. 388; Bilton, *Wicked Beyond Belief*, HarperPress, 2012, pp. 10-13 and 16; *Daily Express* 31st October 1975, *The Times*, 22 January 1976; *The Sun*, 23rd of January 1976, cited by Sandbrook, p.859.

⁷⁶ Smith p.169, quoting David Yallop, *Deliver us From Evil*, 1981, p.64-6.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.166.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Although none of the initial attacks were on sex workers, Smith describes the ‘circular logic’ by which his various assaults and murders were made to fit the pre-existing police narrative once they had settled on a template of a ‘latter day Jack the Ripper’ and thus were expecting him to exclusively kill sex workers. In so-doing police themselves made him mythical; he became unreal, part of an unsolved mystery, part of Gothic images of swirling fog, and part of the landscape of Yorkshire itself. This assimilation with the landscape was both figurative and quite literal: handwriting touted as his, and apparent recordings of his voice (although both actually belonged to Humble) were made visible and audible in myriad public places at all times of day. Thus, the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ was not simply killing in Yorkshire, but came to represent Yorkshire itself, as a state of the region, which, while he was at large, was hostile for all women, and whose pre-existing ambient hostility produced him. This mythologising (abetted by media and police representation) amplified and atomised an atmosphere in which no woman was safe, since there was no way of distinguishing him from ‘us’, for of course he was both. A central theme of representations of Sutcliffe, therefore, and indeed of the realities of the search for him, is that he was indistinguishable from so-called ‘normal’ men.

Northern Masculinity: Subaltern Self-Sufficiency

The range of expression available in cultural narratives for Northern masculinities is more limited than those for their Southern counterparts. In Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell’s analyses of Northern sport and masculinities and of Northern identities and representations,⁷⁹ they posit that the North is represented in popular imagination as

⁷⁹ Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell, *Sporting Heroes of The North: Sport, Region and Culture* (Northumbria Press, Newcastle, 2010); Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004).

‘the land of the working-classes’.⁸⁰ By extension northern masculinities are by default heavily overlapped with tropes of *working-class* masculinity – hegemonic masculinity – containing some or all of stereotypical traits such as physicality, hypersexuality, toughness, self-reliance, emotional closedness, and a swaggering self-regard complicated and/or offset by an inherent insecurity, manifesting itself in defensiveness and aggression. Indeed, such stereotypical class determiners dominate gender in the hierarchy of how a Northern subject is to be ‘read’, so that Northern femininity (as Wagg and Russell suggest) is coded as ‘tougher’ and more masculine than Southern.

As Wagg identifies, there is a strong tradition of (particular types of) literary and pop-cultural representations of men from Yorkshire as a particular type,

The history of English popular culture is littered with images of the Yorkshire man [as ...] untamed [...] Popular fiction in the last fifty years has steadily mined the rich seam of brooding Yorkshire maleness. In the 1960s and 1970s there were the novels of David Storey and Stan Barstow. During the same period there was a regular diet of TV drama on the ‘trouble at mill’ theme [...] to the extent that] this genre was eventually parodied.⁸¹

Even Wagg’s language in describing this phenomenon is revealing; without identifying it as such he gives an indication of the kind of reifying cultural unconscious at work in how the Yorkshire male, and by extension the Yorkshire male body (working-class males being so commonly relegated to purely the bodily), is perceived: as property, as animals to be ‘tamed’, as for consumption (a ‘diet’), raw materials ‘mined’, part of the landscape itself (a ‘brooding’ ‘seam’).⁸² He explores how this gendered set of tropes works within a sport context but, while recognising and appreciating the specificity of the construct he describes, I extend this both geographically and culturally, more loosely adapting the

⁸⁰ Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell, ‘Introduction’ in Wagg and Russell, *Sporting Heroes of The North*, p.x.

⁸¹ Stephen Wagg, ‘Muck or Nettles: Men, Masculinity and Myth in Yorkshire Cricket’ in Wagg and Russell, *Sporting Heroes of The North*, p.2.

⁸² I will discuss this further in detail in Chapter One, ‘A Bit Of The Other’.

salient points where applicable to a broader remit of Northern-coded masculinity.

However, its relevance to the Yorkshire Ripper mythos is apparent to Wagg from the start; noting that, in addition to the lack of writing generally on the topic,

Still less has been said *by* women about the cult of the Yorkshire male and, in this regard [...] Nicole Ward Jouve[’s 1986] book about the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ murders [...], *The Streetcleaner* stands out as extraordinary.

Wagg summarises Ward Jouve’s ‘relat[ing of] the killings to the culture of masculinity in which [...] Sutcliffe has grown up’, a culture in which ‘there is an assumed fear of the feminine’ which Sutcliffe (as Smith also argues) attempted to assuage and relieve in himself by a series of more and more ‘aggressive, masculine gestures’ (including motorbikes, bodybuilding, and performative homosocial demonstrations of misogyny) to ‘obliterate the feminine in himself’. Wagg develops Jouve’s (and, by extension, without engaging with it, Smith’s) argument, asserting that

what counted as ‘soft’ in the prevailing [white] masculine ideology of post-war Yorkshire society [...] was likely to include expressions of emotion and/or [...] concern for others, such as ethnic minorities or even workmates. But these notions of male behaviour were well entrenched [...] in the wider life of the county well before the Second World War.⁸³

Wagg’s tacit idea of Yorkshire masculinity as a subaltern identity is of immense importance: the idea that behaving *as if* the code of behaviour dictated by class, regional and gendered power relations has been deliberately chosen as a form of resistance, rather than emerging as an outcome of these relations remaining unchallenged.⁸⁴ Wagg only uses the word subaltern once, doing so to highlight the nuances, differences and contradictions between the strata and performance of hierarchical Yorkshire class roles, rather than describe the whole of Yorkshire and indeed Northern masculinity *per se*. However, he *does* refer explicitly to a ‘subaltern mentality’, ‘perfectly envoke[d]’ by ‘the manifest denial, but tacit acceptance, of social class in constructed Yorkshireness’ within

⁸³ Ibid., p.2-3.

⁸⁴ Wagg, ‘Muck or Nettles’, in Wagg and Russell pp.1-29.

the pre-war sporting realm he examines, which forms a bedrock for later developments in the valences of the area's culture.⁸⁵ I would go on to suggest that such conflicted forms of resistance and capitulation operate overlappingly in the self-construction and performance of (this particular strand of) Northern masculinities, and the subaltern political relationship of class and space between this and the normative South: a relationship in which the desire for, and illusion of, revolt is channelled into forms that do not effect political change.

Oh I've An Acquaintance With Both: Brady's Scottishness

While these cases' representational legacies are reliant on cultural stereotypes of 'extreme' 'Northern' forms of masculinity, upon the shifting and differently weighted tropes of masculinity appearing and competing within the canon of Northern gendered 'types', the important fact remains that Brady is Glaswegian. Thus, while his typography is still of the North, and there is undoubtedly considerable overlap between tropes of Scottish-ness and Northern Englishness, we must nevertheless consider the separate and contrasting cultural valences of Scottish-ness and how this inflects his myth. For an English audience (and being an English criminal case – in which the crimes were committed, apprehended and tried in England – the majority of its representation has been English and/or English-facing) Brady has frequently been lumped in with Hindley by class, with his regional specificity elided or subsumed by a region that is itself class(ed) as a general working-class North. This is especially the case in contemporary accounts: readers of Sparrow and Hansford Johnson's accounts are left in no doubt as to

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.5.

his employment status and social class, but could easily be unaware that Brady was not English.⁸⁶

When deployed, however, his Scottish-ness also adds particular resonances, or, emphasises certain elements of his undifferentiated myth. Traits of cleverness, intellectualism, coldness, quickness, a tendency for violence, a parsimonious austerity, discipline, inventiveness, brooding, lean cragginess, hard drinking, sadism, wildness, extremity, two-sidedness, ruthlessness, an association with the supernatural, and a certain type of whimsy all have differently inflected analogues in Scottish stereotype to Northern English. The concept of 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' is, in relation to Brady, especially of use here. Originally coined by G. Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), the term means the combination of two competing extremes within one person, and this quality is posited as specific to the Scottish national identity, psyche and cultural production.⁸⁷ While the exact timbre of extreme masculinity may differ, like Wagg and Russell's conception of 'subaltern' 'muck and nettles' Yorkshire masculinity, Maureen M. Martin likewise describes longstanding stereotypes of Scottish masculinity as including both elements of 'defeat' and 'wild' 'primal', 'rugged and dangerous' 'virilizing force'.⁸⁸ In both cases the masculine mystique centres around the construction of an eroticised and exoticised, authentic and untamed (but tameable) Other to civilised, domestic, rational Southern English masculinity.

⁸⁶ Among the '[o]ne hundred and fifty journalists' who arrived to cover the the trial, including Emlyn Williams, 'who had begun his book about the case at the end of 1965', (Lee, p.269) author and literary biographer Pamela Hansford Johnson and former judge in Thailand and true crime author Gerald Sparrow attended and wrote about their impressions in *On Iniquity: some personal reflections arising out of the Moors Murders trial* (London: Macmillan, 1967) and *Satan's Children* (London: Odhams, 1966) respectively.

⁸⁷ G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919) (pp.4-27). See also Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature (Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009) pp.11-14; Maureen M. Martin, *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity* (New York: State UP, 2009), p. 84.

⁸⁸ Martin, p.20; 29; 33.

These spaces and their associations are culturally yoked to ideas of class. Ideas of the North and other working-class-coded spaces are deployable and not innate. Their meanings relate to pre-existing tropes of urban, rural, industrial and domestic space, to expectations regarding genre and iconography, and to gender, sexuality and race, and to time, which in itself recalibrates and redraws each of these other elements: all of them are aligned in their temporary context at the time of the crimes, and at the time of each subsequent representation. Drawing on such theories of place outlined above, my thesis applies them specifically to the construction of the North, murderers and the true-crime genre in particular. Depiction of materiality is reliant on the intersection of spaces, bodies and commodities, but also on turning bodies and spaces into commodities themselves. The kinds of classed, gendered spaces and bodies that the presentation of the North relies upon are *also* the key elements of the presentation of murderers integral to the true-crime genre. An important commonality between all three is their deployment of quotidian and excess. The central aim of this thesis is to discover, firstly, what is distinctive to representations of the North; secondly, what is distinctive to representations of murderers (and these murderers in particular); thirdly, what is distinctive to true crime, and, finally, the ways in which these interrelate and are reliant on one another.

Northientalism Literature Review

Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' forms the background

theoretical framework that informs all regional studies.⁸⁹ His idea of the inception of ‘print capitalism’ and its new use of ‘vernacular’ being materially instrumental in creating imagined communities – and the regulation of public and private life through the disciplinary function of capitalist time – has specific material implications for the construction of celebrity killers as well as for the media and cultural landscape of regionality in general. It also has more metaphorical resonances – the images used and the stereotypes repeated are a form of vernacular, mental shorthand, a set of commonplace associations in the communication of narratives embedded in everyday experience. Many writers have noticed a northern cultural imaginary and written about it, either in general popular cultural studies or travel writing, yet in so doing have rendered this northern cultural capital in an evocative way for pleasurable consumption as myth even while they partially interrogate it. Some examples include Peter Davidson’s *The Idea of North* (2005), Stuart Maconie’s *Pies and Prejudice* (2007); Ed Glinert’s *The Manchester Compendium: A Street-by-Street History of England’s Greatest Industrial City* (2009), Martin Wainwright’s *True North* (2010), and Paul Morley’s *The North* (2013). Despite often epitomising an internalised self-exoticising lens, their lyrical associations both spark connections to the imaginative intertexts outlined above and raise the quasi-psychogeographical semi-mystical thread underlying much representation of Northern landscapes.

There have been a number of more rigorous and theoretically-grounded scholarly iterations of this idea. Stuart Rawnsley argues that the institutions and discourses that over the past two centuries would seem to have most developed a single unified England – e.g. the BBC, the railway network and the standardised time that accompanied it,

⁸⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (first published 1983, this edition. London: Verso, 2006).

received pronunciation and a single language, have all actually exacerbated the idea of the 'North' as a different place from – and a place different from – the South.⁹⁰ Both he and Stephen Kohl have identified a longstanding tradition presenting the North of England as exotic and (specifically physically) Other. Kohl has examined how literary travel writing has, from its inception, 'used a "Southern" perspective to emphasise the difference of the "North"' – to such an extent that the North has been presented as un-English, a 'fallen' version of a normative South.⁹¹ Most useful for my project has been Russell's overview of the cultural applications and resonances of the North of England, and his work with Wagg on the sporting culture of the North.⁹² In visual and screen contexts, David Forrest and Sue Vice's, 'poetics of the North', and Forrest and Beth Johnson's 'Northern stardom' have proved useful concepts.⁹³ The kinds of landscape resonances raised by the sorts of travel and life writing I describe above are unpicked in a screen context in Peter Hutchings's 'Uncanny Landscapes', which has provided, along with Birch, a starting point for my theories about space, physicality and the North.⁹⁴

The main point at which this thesis exceeds and diverges from such works about Northern-ness is that my examination of the North is through the focalising lens of Northern murder cases, and their presentation in true-crime genres and true-crime-influenced texts. Likewise, I differ from the writings I have discussed about celebrity

⁹⁰ Stuart Rawnsley, 'Constructing "The North": Space and a Sense of Place', in *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of 'The North' and 'Northernness'*, ed. Neville Kirk (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp.3-22.

⁹¹ Stephen Kohl, 'The "North" of "England": A Paradox?', in Christoph Ehland (ed.) *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England* (2007), pp.93-116.

⁹² Wagg and Russell, 2004.

⁹³ David Forrest and Sue Vice, 'A Poetics of the North: Visual and Literary Geographies', in *Regional Aesthetics: Mapping UK Media Cultures*, ed. Ieuan Franklin, Hugh Chignell, Kristin Skoog (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 55-70; See David Forrest and Beth Johnson's forthcoming Special-issue dossier on 'Northern Stardom' for the *Journal of Popular Television* (Journal of Popular Television, vol 4, no. 2., October 2016).

⁹⁴ Peter Hutchings, 'Uncanny Landscapes in British Film and television', *Visual Culture in Britain*. Vol. 5, no. 2, pp.27-40. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004).

criminals in that I do so in a specifically northern context. Class is a centrally defining factor of my discussion of the North, underscoring every iteration of its cultural imaginary. My way into this aspect of that cultural imaginary, the central cornerstone of the thesis, is the way in which cultural representations of these killers focus obsessively on the detailed working-class quotidian surrounding them and their victims - implicitly implying that their creation myth is embedded in a northern *working-class* imaginary in which 'evil' is both extraneous and yet inherent/imminent. As I explain in detail in Chapter Two, in my framing of this I draw upon Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), the classic accounts of this kind of political and social economy, as an underlying way of approaching the machinations of capital and media.

Structure: chapter outline and corpus of primary texts

This thesis is structured in three chapters, examining written representations (true crime and fiction), screen representation (television and film), and musical representations (music and associated promotional/paratextual materials).

The first section of Chapter One traces the historical context and formal attributes of the true crime genre, and how this parallels and establishes conventions of Northern geographical and bodily materiality. To this end I provide a range of examples from true crime accounts of unrelated cases before focusing in on analysis of how these themes are developed in *Beyond Belief* (Emlyn Williams, 1967), *Somebody's Husband*, *Somebody's Son*, (Gordon Burn, 1984), and the true-crime fiction *Myra*, *Beyond*

Saddleworth, (Jean Rafferty, 2012).

This is followed by a discussion of the representation of 'The North', demonstrating first how it is constructed on specific stereotyped class and gender assumptions, and located in certain aesthetics (expanding upon my concept of Northientalism). I identify the ways a specifically Northern imaginary is constructed with regard to the body, space, materiality and genre. From the Northern body I turn to that of the celebrity criminal, examining the ways the body of the killer, development of sexuality as the development of the self, and carefully managed allusions to abuse are staged in *Beyond Belief*, *Somebody's Husband*, *Somebody's Son*, and Skip Kite's 2011 film *Peter: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, specifically looking at autoeroticism and teenage bedroom self-construction, subaltern masculinity, competitiveness, rape culture, and the use of visual display and concealment in the texts. Expanding upon this and the use of domestic and interior space in a Northern crime context, I return to Northern spaces and uses of landscape, shifting from Birch's conception of 'Gothic soap opera' to Lee and Bourke's discussion of the cultural meaning of moorland, and Northern landscapes in these cases, using examples from *Myra*, *Beyond Saddleworth*. I then return to previous texts, summarising how sexuality, concrete physical detail, and space are the key features both of true crime in general *and* crucial to Northientalism. The penultimate section examines David Peace's 'Red Riding' quartet of novels as demonstrating my Northientalism and spatial theories and the ways in which such texts use the Yorkshire Ripper case as a backdrop for highlighting wider social ills. I then discuss further their depiction of abuse, time, and what Matthew Hart calls occult history: a metaphorical, mythological use of supernatural textual elements to foreground a disjunction between official history and lived experience, particularly in power struggles and abusive social relations. Abuse

culture and the enforced secrecy and doublethink surrounding it is a theme that I develop, moving from analysis of 'Red Riding', to brief examples from *Once In A House On Fire*, (Andrea Ashworth, 1998) *An Island Of Our Own*, (Sally Nichols, 2015) *The Unbearable Lightness of Being In Aberystwyth*, (Malcolm Pryce, 2005) and *The Death of a Murderer* (Rupert Thomson, 2007). I will show how, in these texts, the direct representation of the killers this thesis examines is used as a kind of 'screen memory' for child abuse – simultaneously drawing attention to and concealing it – by replacing abuse experienced by characters therein with gestures towards famous abusers such as these, in much the same way that Williams's depiction of Brady's 'self abuse' is a screen for the abuse that cannot be represented within the text: a technique that hinges on visual display. Finally, I end the chapter by considering the use of cultural intertexts and references to other textual cultural commodities, specifically those of popular music, to thematically and temporally set the scene in true crime, and the ways in which these uses engage with physicality and myth, time and haunting, meta-media presentation, and the potential for myth and resistant histories to fill in the gaps – and challenge the enforced silences – of official history.

Chapter Two begins by reiterating the importance of the body in space for the genre of true crime, and describes how this works outside a written setting. I explain the similarities and differences between written and filmed forms. I then investigate how different kinds of intertext are vital to screen representations of real killers: intertexts of forensics, media, actor and production, as well as popular gender tropes. Drawing on both Debord and Film Studies' interpretations of Spectacle I outline how important themes of surveillance, performance, self-fashioning, libidinal drives, staging and

visuality/display all emerge from this, and how they function specifically in the context of constructing celebrity killers. I summarise how the investigation undertaken in this thesis operates at the juncture between time, space, and the figure of the killer in terms of how landscape and space are constructed and the kinds of socio-cultural and generic milieu these imply. I relate this back to the intertextual connections of these texts and their place in a broader cultural web, examining the star personas of the cast and the meanings this creates regarding authenticity, performance and 'types', and the class and gender codes woven into these, as well as the news-media-coding through which this operates within screen true crime.

The texts I analyse to explore this are television serial dramas *See No Evil* (Christopher Menaul, 2006) and the 'Red Riding' television film serial *Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1974* (Julian Jarrold, 2009), *Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1980* (Anand Tucker, 2009) and *Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1983* (James Marsh, 2009),⁹⁵ and the films *Longford* (Tom Hooper, 2006) and *Peter: Portrait Of A Serial Killer* (Skip Kite, 2011).⁹⁶ I use the television comedy sketch satirising 'Red Riding', 'Gritty Bafta'⁹⁷ to demonstrate the economy within which a large number of these detachable tropes of Northern-ness and crime can be evoked.

Examining the gendered and regionally-inscribed body, and the staging of the bodies of killers, in *See No Evil*, 'Red Riding', and *Longford*, I explore the foregrounding of

⁹⁵ Adapted from the David Peace novels discussed in Chapter One. The films were televised as a TV serial drama from the 5th March 2009 and released in cinemas from February 2010.

⁹⁶ I also briefly refer to some of the many TV documentaries on the subject of these killers, but, as with my choice to exclude media and directly journalistic representation from my primary source material in the previous chapter, so here too I focus on hybrid dramatic representations rather than documentary or reportage. I mainly examine the second film of the series, as the others do not directly represent the Yorkshire Ripper and his crimes. I also use a brief extract of *This Is Personal: The Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper* (David Richards, 2000) to demonstrate a point.

⁹⁷ 'Gritty Bafta' in 'Series 2 Episode 1', *The Kevin Bishop Show* (Dominic Bridgstocke, 2009).

performance as a locus of power, and the establishment of masculinity through Eve Sedgwick's conception of homosocial bonding over women and through a stage-managing pedagogical control of the narrative of the situation. I discuss the depiction of adult male bodies as vulnerable but also as a sexualised threat, a locus of excess, and the turning of non-adult male bodies into mere matter; in short, the representation of both as commodities, but in different ways. I then return to the use of visual display and concealment, as discussed in Chapter One, with regard to *Beyond Belief* and *Peter: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, chasing further the implications of this, and of its relations to Wagg's conception of Northern masculinity. I examine how this allows for both a scapegoating approach to abuse culture's relegation of non-men's bodies to raw materials and also, in turn, to the classist use of adult male bodies *as* raw materials.⁹⁸ The use of bodies as materials (my theories of which are informed by Lukács' conception of reification) are then discussed within *See No Evil*, 'Red Riding' and *This Is Personal: The Hunt For The Yorkshire Ripper*, and the ways in which media and news are presented as using suffering as the raw material for its product, in a paradoxical relationship of resistance and complicity to official history and official interests.⁹⁹

In my third and final chapter, I foreground the particularly intertextual, referential relationship popular music has to the other texts in this thesis, and the ways in which indie and alternative music's representation of real-life events constitutes an attempt to critique official narratives of history. I structure this chapter by time and genre, the latter being inevitably intrinsically linked to the former. In the first section I chronologically historicise how punk and industrial genres responded to the myth

⁹⁸ Non-men's bodies are already conceptualised as raw material; for men's bodies to be so relegated they have to be Othered in some way first (non-men's bodies are already Other).

⁹⁹ György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Massachusetts: MIT, 1971).

surrounding the Moors Murders case and the kinds of proliferation that result, and the ways in which this formed the seed-bed for immediate representations of the Yorkshire Ripper case. Again we see a simultaneous resistance to and complicity with official discourses surrounding the case – and indeed, these are themselves multivalent and face multiple ways simultaneously, allowing the killers at its centre to become a source of easily deployable iconography, but also to become infinitely available for others to project their own anxieties and desires onto. I relate this to the process of proliferation in late capitalism, demonstrating how unmoored images related to the case go on to have a commodified pop-cultural afterlife in the form of album covers, t-shirts and internet memes.

In the second part of this chapter I take a more thematic approach, exploring how Indie uses these killers' mythologies, continuing my examination of the unmoored pop-cultural proliferation of these criminal cases by analyzing Morrissey's various lyrics depicting the Moors Murders. I then elucidate the unconscious cultural work connecting Pulp with Hindley via the television satire *Brass Eye*, the other cultural texts this implicates, and Kieran Cashell's analysis of Marcus Harvey's *Myra* as a key lynchpin between the two. Using this I return to themes emerging from *Beyond Belief* and *Portrait* about masculinity, competition, homosociality through the objectification of women, the spectacle and economics of sexual and of gendered power inequality, and the voluntary and involuntary sexualisation of Northern bodies through a touristic othering gaze. Finally, using Luke Haines's *Leeds United*, a musical exploration of the Yorkshire Ripper's myth, I examine the construction of time and space and Haines's intertextually-inflected confrontation of Sutcliffe's myth with the political return of its rape-cultural repressed within the broader context of both his oeuvre of depictions of

celebrity paedophiles and murderers and the historical moment of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first revelations of a systemic, ingrained and untouchable culture of abuse.

Chapter One: True Crime and Fiction

Materiality

Emerging alongside and out of certain types of journalistic writing in the mid-twentieth century, true crime's modern incarnation overlaps most significantly with modes predominantly afforded low- and middlebrow status, such as life writing, novels, paranormal mysteries, and so-called genre fiction (particularly historical and crime variants). True crime also operates in ways similar to, and in the spaces between, other genres, particularly historical fiction and life writing (accounts written by journalists tending more towards biography, and accounts by relatives of killers or victims, towards autobiography). However, it also draws upon (and feeds back into) literary waves, for example modernist reuse of the bildungsroman, or the 1960s' social realist novel. These distinctions are arbitrary and protean; the highbrow is never truly separate from 'lower' forms, which furthermore do not remain statically and ahistorically defined.¹ Genre is inherently historically contingent: any description of genre is a description of time periods in which it rose and fell and shifted as it absorbed new combinations of desires and anxieties. Indeed, genres are far more mixed, mutable and unruly even in their inception than our retrospective characterisation of them admits; convention is challenged not only over time, but even as it solidifies in the first place.

As Schmid argues, the precise origins of true crime as genre 'are obscure', with anthologies including pieces from as early as 1651.² Some of the best known early examples include Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821)

¹ Film Noir, for example, famously underwent a transformation from pulp to arthouse.

² David Schmid, 2010, p.198.

and his 1827 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts' in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the many works (between 1889-1949) of William Roughead, and Edmund Pearson's various accounts of real criminal cases from the nineteenth century to the 1930s. Joyce Carol Oates highlights the 'enormous' significance and great fame of Roughead's trial reports from Edinburgh's High Court of Justiciary.³ In the British context especially the 'Notable Scottish Trials' series (1905-59), of which William Roughead had been one of several editors, and its later spin-off 'Notable British Trials' (1921-59), Elizabeth Jenkins's *The Penge Mystery* (1934), Inspector Dew's *I Caught Crippen* (1938), and Yseult Bridges's *The Tragedy At Road-Hill House* (1954), *How Charles Bravo Died: the Chronicle Of a Cause Celebre* (1956), and *Two Studies In Crime: the Murder of Lord William Russell* (1959) also all constitute significant progenitors.

Pearson, whose true crime oeuvre began 'with *Studies in Murder* in 1924 and conclude[ed] with *More Studies in Murder* in 1936' (as Schmid explains) 'gave true crime narratives a status they had never before possessed [... and] made it possible for true crime [... to] take its place with other legitimate genres'.⁴ Heavily influenced by De Quincey, Pearson focussed on the ideological aesthetics of the so-called 'pure' murder, pointing out that his approach 'may [even] suggest that he wanted to elevate the genre of true crime out of history altogether, turning it into a disinterested object of aesthetic contemplation'.⁵ Such an endeavour – turning crime into the object of disinterested contemplation, an act of artistry or philosophical enquiry – becomes a feature of true crime for at least the next few decades. Indeed, Ian Brady attributed the motivations behind his crimes to just such an aesthetic and philosophical inflection, and its pursuit is

³ Joyce Carol Oates, 'The Mystery of JonBenét Ramsey', *The New York Review of Books*, 46: 11, 24th June 1999.

⁴ Schmid, 2010, p. 200.

⁵ Ibid, p.202.

central to the representation of the murderer as artist, and exceptional subject, that forms the cornerstone of Downing's thesis in *The Subject of Murder*.⁶ This chapter, however, argues that the kind of engagement with crime and criminality that I discuss is less prefigured by Pearson's ironic or aesthetic detachment, and more by the way in which he is 'attracted to certain moments in the crimes he writes about that to him are especially dramatic and meaningful.'⁷ A tendency in *true crime*, the curating of resonant details is of paramount importance to representations, and a trait that seems to have emerged around the time Pearson was writing.

The kind of true crime associated with the genre by the late-twentieth century is historically and stylistically related to the genre of 'new journalism' – a term coined by Tom Wolfe in 1973 to describe a style of written reportage using literary techniques then popular in fiction but hitherto considered unsuited to news.⁸ Many works, like *In Cold Blood* (1965), *Helter Skelter* (1974), *The Executioner's Song* (1979), now considered foundational texts of the true crime genre, were also forerunners of 'new journalism', which like true crime, drew the ire of established journalists.⁹ Dwight MacDonald called it a 'bastard form, having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric licence of fiction.'¹⁰ The desire to position such writing as an impure and illegitimate mixing of 'fact' and fiction illuminates anxieties around the constructed nature of fact. It is akin to the way social fears accruing to the killer's pollutant function

⁶ Downing, p.13.

⁷ Schmid, p.201.

⁸ Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper, 1973). It is worth noting that Cultural Studies was also emerging as a discipline at this time, and so these criminal cases were therefore contemporaneous with not only a new way of turning crime into texts, but also of new ways of regarding criminals (and crime writing) as texts.

⁹ In spite of the fact that the authors of the latter and the former books, Norman Mailer and Truman Capote respectively, are regarded now – and at the time by both themselves and many critics – as literary authors, in a way that many other true crime writers are not.

¹⁰ Dwight MacDonald, 'Parajournalism, or Tom Wolfe and His Magic Writing Machine', *New York Review of Books*, August 26th 1965, pp.3-5.

are also fears of social boundaries in collapse and symptomatic of a repressed knowledge that these boundaries have always been pregnable. However, other commentators have painted the nonfiction novel's blend of fact and fiction (and consequences for the ontological status of both) in a more positive light; as Schmid contends, the nonfiction novel has a 'combination [...] of the authority of nonfiction' with 'the emotive power of fiction'.¹¹ Mas'ud Zavarzadeh describes it as possessing 'the shapeliness of fiction and the authority of reality usually reserved for factual narrative'.¹² As Schmid develops from Zavarzadeh, the 'combination of fiction and reality goes on to make something qualitatively different from either fiction or nonfiction.'¹³

In Cold Blood, widely credited as the first modern true-crime novel, is identified by Schmid as leading 'the genre [to] assume[...] its modern form'.¹⁴ Its author Truman Capote claimed in 1966 to have invented the 'nonfiction novel', describing it as a 'serious new art form'.¹⁵ His work was incredibly influential both on the true-crime narrative itself, and also on its acceptance on literary terms. Critics sometimes had difficulty accepting Capote's assessment of the artistic worth of this 'new' form at face value, however, largely because such work apparently continued to trade upon a lurid public appetite for detailed and intimate knowledge, about both the crimes themselves, and those who committed them. Early accounts of Hindley and Brady's case, for example, are often seen as immediate reflections, or outright exploitation, of the literary innovation

¹¹ Schmid 'The Nonfiction Novel', *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, Leonard Cassuto, Claire Eby and Benjamin Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), pp.986-1001, pp.990-1.

¹² Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p.57.

¹³ Schmid, 2011, p. 999. His point about the fusion of fictional and non-fictional writing into another 'qualitatively different' form is also very like David Paget's point about docudrama that I will outline in Chapter Two.

¹⁴ Schmid, 2010, p.198.

¹⁵ George Plimpton, 'The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel', *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, pp.2-3; 38-43, quoted by Laura Browder in *The Cambridge Companion To American Crime Fiction*, Ed. Catherine Ross Nickerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 121-134, p.121.

ascribed to Capote. S. Alexander Reed, emphasising the speed of publication of John Deane Potter's *The Monsters of the Moors: The Full Account of the Brady-Hindley Case* (1966), explicitly relates it to a wave of journalistic true crime current at the time. He describes it as 'a whole book on the killers – complete with photos [...] breathlessly written and published [...] [w]ithin months of [Hindley and Brady's] arrest', and that due to this emergent trend 'journalists ensured that in English popular culture the infamy of Brady and Hindley would rank second only to Jack the Ripper.'¹⁶ John Patterson, arguing that Capote 'pioneered the genre of true-crime writing', suggests that Williams's *Beyond Belief* (1967) built directly – and immediately – on 'Capote's innovation', and makes much of the apparently indecent haste in which such accounts appeared, emphasising the deployability of the so-called 'Capote approach' as a generic technique in explicitly economic terms (it 'paid off').¹⁷

A 1968 review exemplifies the tendencies to excess outlined here:

This production is not a nonbook or even a sex book. It belongs to the growing category of ugh-books.¹⁸ As the latest representative of the new thing—the de-Sade-but-true school of literature—it owes something to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, except that Capote is a far better writer than Emlyn Williams, [who] enters the lucrative literary creep-stakes, dragging behind him two human monsters and three well-mutilated corpses.¹⁹

While Capote appears to have set a benchmark against which the nonfiction crime novel could be recognised and judged, commentators remained troubled by the idea that such works might come within the arena of 'literary' art – especially when produced by

¹⁶ Reed, p.80-81.

¹⁷ John Patterson, 'Blood type matches', *The Guardian*, 8 February 2006.

¹⁸ Thom Robinson argues that this forms part of a broader context of ongoing discussion of current cultural artefacts in these terms: 'In 1963 the *Times Literary Supplement* had a damning review of William Burroughs' work entitled 'UGH...' which led to a lively and ongoing correspondence in their letters page (appearing each week under headings like 'More UGH...' or similar). I would guess th[is] *Time* reviewer was aware of this', Thom Robinson, unpublished correspondence with the author.

¹⁹ 'Books: Creep-Stakes Entry', *Time*, Friday, 9 February 1968.

writers who, unlike Capote, appeared to lack the 'literary' pedigree to balance artistic seriousness and gratuitous spectacle.

Meyer Levin's 1956 account of the Leopold and Loeb case, *Compulsion*, which pre-dates *In Cold Blood*, also influenced *Beyond Belief*, and was allegedly a favourite book of the young Ian Brady, who was also a fan of the 1959 film adaption, and reportedly gave Myra Hindley a copy when they first became romantically involved.²⁰ Despite the links between *Compulsion* and the 'Moors Murders' case, and to Williams' account, its comparative obscurity and lack of canonical status made it less of a ready tool to express unease over both Williams' nonfiction novel specifically and the genre as a whole. Patterson's aside that, 'of all people', it was 'The British' who have best developed the form also suggests a sense of the importance of an American setting for the genre, and even skepticism about transferability onto British spaces and cases. Nevertheless, *Beyond Belief* became a foundational text for the Moors Murderers myth, forming the basis of Hindley and Brady's representational canon, and drawn on subsequently in a variety of contexts. It set the framework for the specific model of the modes of gender, sexuality, power and regionality found in the killers' future representations.

By the 1980s, however, at the same time that new journalism was on the wane (as both descriptor and genre), true crime was coming into its own, with a boom that only slowed in the 1990s.²¹ Just as film genres develop in cycles of repetition, in which public

²⁰ A widely reported case in which Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb kidnapped and then murdered 14-year-old Robert Franks in Chicago, in 1924. Lee, p.99-100; Downing, *The Subject of Murder*, pp.100-101; p.217.

²¹ The coining of the term 'serial killer' in 1974 and its filtering into media usage and increased mainstream awareness over the next decade and a half also strengthened this process. As Biressi argues (regarding Britain): 'since the 1980s [... t]rue crime publishing began to expand significantly [...] and only showed signs of entering a mild decline towards the late 1990s'. Biressi, p.2.

interest sparks imitation followed by boredom and reinvention in search of novelty, so true crime developed cyclically as written genre and publishing phenomenon. The upsurge in quasi-fictional crime books created a proliferation that drove and fluctuated its own momentum: an accelerating increase in examples emerged from the popularity of initial texts, which then enshrined their qualities in reader expectations whilst simultaneously innovating and pushing the limits of what the (still snowballing) genre could encompass.

This acceleration, in the British context, was also due to new high-profile criminals emerging as potential sources of material (for example, Peter Sutcliffe, arrested on January the 2nd 1981 and Dennis Nilsen, on February the 9th 1983).²² Furthermore, new developments emerged in existing famous cases, for example, Brady's confession to journalist Fred Harrison in 1985 (the year that Hindley had been due to be considered for parole) to two further murders, of Pauline Reade and Keith Bennett.²³ This resulted in media frenzy, spurred on by the subsequent search for the bodies, and Harrison's publication within a year of a book about the case.²⁴ Media attention had already been brought back to the case the previous year by indie band The Smiths' release of a song about the case, 'Suffer Little Children', which had generated considerable controversy.²⁵ 1984 was also the year that Gordon Burn's *Somebody's Husband, Somebody's Son*, a foundational text for the Yorkshire Ripper's mythology, was published. As with Hindley's famous 'mugshot', therefore, when it comes to famous criminals,

²² David Yallop's account of the Yorkshire Ripper case, *Deliver Us From Evil* was published shortly after Sutcliffe's trial in 1981, having been prepared and submitted to the publishers before Sutcliffe had been arrested and confessed.

²³ Jean Ritchie, *Myra Hindley: Inside the Mind of a Murderess* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1988), p.252.

²⁴ Fred Harrison, *Brady and Hindley: Genesis of the Moors Murders* (London: Ashgrove, 1986).

²⁵ A B-side on their single *Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now* and an album track on their eponymous debut album of the same year. See Chapter Three for further discussion of the track and its social and media reception.

representation begets further representations, each trailing a flurry of media attention, each adding both its own and respondents' material to the overall weight and momentum of their cultural proliferation.

Materiality as a specific feature of the true crime genre

We have already seen how commentators reacted to the true-crime novel as the product of literary and journalistic practises. However, I would argue that a significant (but frequently overlooked) internal element of true crime is its close-up view of the physicality of objects and of spatial and bodily-spatial locations.

In his review of *Murder at Wrotham Hill*, Blake Morrison, author of 'The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper', describes true-crime texts as often

also stories about places: the moor where Brady and Hindley took their victims; the Gloucester house in which Fred West buried his; the Savannah of John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Other accounts concentrate on motive: *So Brilliantly Clever*, Peter Graham's study of how the New Zealand teenagers Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme battered Pauline's mother to death (the case featured in the film *Heavenly Creatures*), disentangles the complex dynamic between the two girls. In *Murder at Wrotham Hill*, Diana Souhami's focus is different: not place or psychology but period – the when rather than the where or why. It's a story set in the early days of postwar Britain. And both the murderer and murderess were classic products of the age.²⁶

These remarks are wilfully reductive. It is patently untrue to suggest that true-crime accounts of the Moors Murders narrative are mostly about moors and not the 1960s – and indeed, other locations. It is also not possible to disentangle the psychology of a crime from its location, nor can accounts of location be timeless. Morrison's suggestion that *Murder at Wrotham Hill* – whose title is itself a place – is 'different' to the other

²⁶ Blake Morrison, 'Murder at Wrotham Hill by Diana Souhami – review', *The Guardian*, Manchester, 23 November 2012.

examples he has given, and that it is exceptional in portraying a time period, indicates that rather than attempting an accurate survey of the key elements of true crime as a genre, he merely uses this list as a rhetorical jumping-off point to assess *Murder at Wrotham Hill's* strengths and weaknesses.²⁷ This illustrates how the genre lends itself to synecdoche and essentialism, especially with regard to places and their inhabitants' projected norms. Similar dangers accrue to categorising a text as 'postwar': the norms readers expect are allotted by constructed time periods rather than constructed spaces. In fact, the concept of 'classic products of their age' is useful, less for any 'truth' such products might encapsulate, than to indicate what the commonplace discourses at certain times were about certain other times.

Morrison is right to emphasise, however, that these themes are integral to true crime. His justifying remarks about 'period detail' are also illustrative, leading to further consideration about what true crime is and does:

As a child of the 1940s, [Souhami]'s fascinated, above all, by the period detail – the fact that Dagmar was strangled with a man's vest which she'd bought at the market for a shilling and wore as a scarf; that when her mother saw in the paper that a woman answering to Dagmar's description had been found murdered, she had to trek to the telephone box to inform the police (hers wasn't one of the 4m British homes with a phone); that Pierrepoint hanged 253 men in the three years after the war, all but 27 of them Nazi war criminals.

These kinds of details undoubtedly give us a flavour of the times, but the detail is not *just* typical of the time, *per se*, but also unusual and personal within it. We are offered lit-up icons of the poignant and disturbing – the affective – specificity of the real: e.g. a man's vest worn as a scarf. As Sean O'Connor argues:

²⁷ However, to be fair to Morrison, true-crime accounts of periods prior to the 1960s seem to foreground their own attempts to situate the episode temporarily in a more upfront manner than those after. Or, perhaps inevitably, rather, true crime written at a greater remove from its immediate context draws more attention to the case's temporal context than those written nearer to the time of the crime.

it is the seemingly insignificant details that seem most profoundly to articulate the sense of loss, that break through the patina of sixty-odd years to pierce our hearts: a leopardette coat, a powder compact with a cracked mirror, a caterpillar badge.²⁸

This emotional resonance through the concrete is typical of the strange trinkets of physical detail we find littered throughout true crime: such as in Jean Ritchie's *Inside The Mind Of A Murderess* the cream and brown tartan pumps Hindley wore during the murder of Edward Evans; the image that recurs in *Beyond Belief, Inside The Mind Of A Murderess*, and others, of Ian Brady, naked save a string vest, being arrested by a policeman dressed as a bread delivery worker.²⁹ Details of hair and dress serve as signifiers of authenticity: as an 'insistent' 'sign of the real' of the sort Roland Barthes discusses in *Mythologies*.³⁰ The songwriter Brett Anderson, discussing his lyric 'they found his made up name | on her ankle chain', about his own aunt and the (then illegal) suicide pact she died in, remarks on the sensation of authenticity this kind of detail-as-realness produces: 'the ankle chain and stuff like that, is the kind of detail that can only come from truth, that can't be conjured up.'³¹ While untrue – it can be and *is* constructed – Anderson correctly highlights the affective power of detail to create an *impression* of un-forgeable realness.

Immediate, concrete physical detail, then – its materiality and its use as social history – is central to true crime's texture and fascination. The fictionalised Dave Smith in *See No Evil* neatly summarises the kinds of artefacts, and activities, that true crime brings together, when he narrates the killing of Edward Evans to his wife Maureen, Myra

²⁸ Sean O'Connor, *Handsome Brute* (London: Simon And Schuster, 2013), p.395.

²⁹ Ritchie, p.77; p. 84; Williams, p. 48.

³⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1973, this edition New York: Vintage, 1993, trans. Annette Lavers).

³¹ Suede, 'She's Not Dead' (Nude, 1993); David Barnett, *Suede: Love & Poison: The Official Biography* (London: Andre Deutsch, 2003), p.102.

Hindley's sister: 'they've been calm ever since it happened, "sit down, have a cup of tea, have a ciggie". They made me clean up. I had to kneel in the blood.' This image of tea and blood suggests the underlying violence of the quotidian – but also the everydayness of violence.³² And yet their simultaneous depiction affectively yokes *apparently* different areas, indicating the necessity of thingness for representing murder. The pollutant mingling of murder and domesticity is central to this thesis, excess and quotidian being the joint poles of true crime. Morrison adds that Souhami speaks of her indecisiveness in initially settling on the 'subject of her book', previously having considered writing about 'the case of Margaret Allen, who dressed as a man, worked as a bus conductor, and hammered an elderly neighbour to death in 1948.' Again, Morrison's sprinkling of detail, conjuring for us the true-crime novel that never was (or rather, how the subject matter could have been treated if given the classic true crime genre working), offers this brief smorgasbord of the typical and the unusual as representative – and condensed evoker – of true crime *as a genre*. To develop a strand of Schmid's argument that 'tension between normality and monstrosity [...] is a structuring feature of [true crime] narratives',³³ I would add that another (closely related yet distinct) structuring feature of the genre is the juxtaposition of *physical objects* categorised as everyday and exceptional. The placing of murder and mundanity together presents both as — paradoxically — integrally embedded in the quotidian details of life. The physical details of both blood and tea are on the same footing, merely types of undifferentiated matter, undifferentiated information – what Barthes describes as an 'effect of reality',³⁴ in which

³² As an additional example of this juxtaposing of tea as signifier of the homely and familiar and the pollutant touch of the murderer, the actor playing Brady in this scene, Sean Harris, has an amusing stock repertoire of 'sinister tea drinking techniques' he employs in many of his typecast villain roles.

³³ Schmid, 2005, p.26.

³⁴ Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', *French Literary Theory Today*, 1968.

'The small details of person, place, and action that while contributing little or nothing to the narrative, give the story its atmosphere, making it feel real.'³⁵

True-crime novels cover much of the same ground as the tabloid press, yet as a genre it has something of a transitional relationship with tabloid journalism as a source and with both true crime magazines and 'real life', 'it happened to me' magazines. The interplay with journalism³⁶ – and many true crime books are written by journalists – creates a fluid back and forth, in which many of the same tropes recur. However, released from the tabloid³⁷ pressure of brevity, directness and instant speed, true crime is able to adopt a more lingering physical scrutiny, in which any object appearing in connection with the case is available to be handled and catalogued, and any person's form or attire recorded with the care of a realist novel – or an auction house catalogue or fashion magazine. Its intense and wide-ranging use of the reality-effect fetishises objects, locations and looks, creating an escapist lyricism often lacking in the more blunt and rapid tabloid instant social history. This gaze is not panoptic, but deployed strategically, depending on the 'shape' of the narrative sought (and often the class and social conditions of the key figures), by its selection of artefacts.³⁸ Yet this hands-on, handling, intimate gaze is constant, even if not omnidirectional.

Discussing the visual in true crime, Mark Seltzer argues the genre is dependant on 'forensic realism' that typifies and condenses the general conditions of temporal and cultural location, and that 'compulsion to observation and self-observation [...] is a

³⁵ Ian Buchanan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), p. 401.

³⁶ Preceding the rise of 'misery lit' as a genre, or 'abusive childhood narratives'.

³⁷ In both senses – the word derives from medicine or other materials condensed in a compressed lozenge form, i.e., into tablets.

³⁸ The types of quotidian artefacts are also distinctly classed - different from those in, say, an Agatha Christie novel, for example.

precondition of modernity'.³⁹ By his account, the 'shift from act to observation, and the doubling of both in writing, is [...] one of the markers of modernity and its self-reflection or theorisation', and a marker of 'the modern media' and its reliance on 'the synthetic witnessing [... involved in] what might be described as the media of modern violence'.⁴⁰ His focus is not on fascination with trinkets and the accumulated physical pedigree of clues and backdrops, but on the surveillance function and its ability to spill over into a general worldview: it is not simply that 'The world of true crime is a self-observing world of observers' but that 'forensic observation – conditional and counterfactual – is itself observed as the real work of true crime[: ...] Mapping the known world as the scene of the crime'.⁴¹ He goes on:

There is everywhere a doubling of act and observation, such that public violence and mass death are theatre for the living.

The doubling of act of observation has a specific form in true crime: true crime is premised on an inventory of the aftermath and a result to the scene of the crime. That conjectural re-enactment takes the form of a probable or statistical realism: "you're probably thinking", "you get up at the usual time", "you board the train", and so on. The known world in true crime is the observed world

I endorse Seltzer on the theatricality of staged murder, and particularly his point that the world of true crime is one of constant observation. The potential connotations of his use of the term 'scene of the crime' and the need to return to it has productive resonances for the linking of the forensic and the theatrical (as I discuss in Chapter Two). Indeed, I would argue that scene-setting within a forensic intertext is a vital component of true crime. However, I question his assertion that true crime as a genre is 'premised on an inventory of the aftermath'. Rather, it is premised on the opposite – the build up, the *before time*, that which occurred prior to the crime. In fact true crime interprets the before in the light of the after(math).

³⁹ Mark Seltzer, *True Crime: Observations on Violence and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.24.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.3.

Setting (and) the Scene

The classic opening of a true-crime novel depicts the general geographical location in which a crime took place (i.e. the town or area) and makes broad sweeping remarks about the character and taste of the people who live there. This is usually done in a very specific way, with one subset of people (often normative white males, whose class varies depending on the locale described) representing via synecdoche the character of the area as a whole; any other people are rendered invisible, inconsequential, un-personed.

The tradition is set in the canonical keystone *In Cold Blood*, which opens:

The village of Holcomb stands on the high wheat plains of western Kansas, a lonesome area that other Kansans call “out there.” Some seventy miles east of the Colorado border, the countryside, with its hard blue skies and desert-clear air, has an atmosphere that is rather more Far West than Middle West. The local accent is barbed with a prairie twang, a ranch-hand nasalness, and the men, many of them, wear narrow frontier trousers, Stetsons, and high-heeled boots with pointed toes.⁴²

Burn adopts this technique in *Somebody's Husband, Somebody's Son's* opening lines (p.3):

Although less than six miles along the Aire valley from Bradford, the enduringly Victorian ‘Worstedopolis’ whose dormitory it has increasingly become, Bingley is in many ways a country town, distrustful of, and often hostile to, what are all too easily interpreted as slick city ways. It is a conservative community, tolerant of mild eccentricity but more given to “shamming gaumless” than to acts of flamboyance or outward display.

In both extracts the place and then the character of ‘the people’ are given as a whole, as if the people are a homogenous, cohesive *mass*. This use of unattributed quotation to indicate the mores of the entire locale remains a consistent feature of the genre.⁴³ The

⁴² Capote, *In Cold Blood*, first page.

⁴³ These emblematic remarks, intended to speak for, to stand in place of, the thoughts of the area’s populace as a whole, are recorded in ‘eye dialect’, i.e. non-standardised spelling to indicate that the character speaking has a foreign or regional (i.e. not a normative and thus unmarked) accent, and/or is uneducated, and/or of working-class origins. Walpole, Jane Raymond, ‘Eye Dialect in Fictional Dialogue’, *College Composition and Communication*, 25: 2, May 1974, pp.191-6; Dufrense, John, *The Lie That Tells The*

disingenuous disavowal of performance – as if ‘shamming guamless’ were not ‘outward display’, but a contrast to it – in favour of an imagined straightforwardness and ‘realness’ (a term used repeatedly in *Somebody’s Husband*, *Somebody’s Son*) is also a key facet of ‘Northern’ representations. More broadly, beyond locale-creation, uses of unattributed generalised quotation, or scare quotes – as Seltzer argues – in the media, true crime, and by killers themselves ‘point to criteria of evaluation [...] that are strictly relative to, and only make sense within, self-induced and self-corroborated systems of valuation’.⁴⁴ Such quotes, he posits, ‘are, like the cliché, the quotation of no one in particular, the generalisation of a latent, everyday culture sponsored and held in place by the mass media’.⁴⁵ They are neither intended to be taken literally nor to be disregarded simply as local colour to set an ambiance, but rather, ‘[t]he world in scare quotes indicates the impasse of a way of thinking that has seen through itself but goes on anyway’, a ‘situation of half-belief’ within an ‘archaeology of knowingness’ that constitutes the habitual mode and ‘collective idiom of modernity’ (and, I would add, is key to news values and the conventions of reportage).⁴⁶ In the above examples they are also very much in service of the construction of an othered, apparently homogenous, apparently authentic, working-class local milieu, a specific layer of this ‘everyday culture’ of common sense intended to complement rather than replicate media news orthodoxies.

Truth: A Guide To Writing Fiction (London: Norton, 2003). Rather than an attempt to represent accurately the syntax or phonetics of dialect speech, it functions as a patronising paratextual marker of otherness. Its use is also a generic feature, and one to which *Beyond Belief* adheres especially.

⁴⁴ Seltzer, 2007, p.7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.7-8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.8.

Some opening locations are where a body was found, a victim or killer grew up, or the author's journey to the location to recreate the ambiance of the crime, as in

Beyond Belief:

Suburbs make me feel at home. Working my way through a maze of muted streets indistinguishable from thousands more all over Britain, I ought to feel oppressed by the twentieth-century disease which overnight, in the name of Progress, turns grass to bricks and mortar.⁴⁷

However it is handled, it is a strong generic expectation that true-crime novels start with sweeping aerial shots. Whilst true-crime narrative openings look for origins (a before-time), they quickly zoom in to ever more precise iterations of the quotidian, sequestering domestic spaces into miniture tableaux. Two of what Seltzer identifies as the key central features to true-crime accounts are 'the intensified turn of interiors, bodies and acts into communication', and 'the sequestration and self-reflection of the contemporary social field [... a] model of the world, modelled above all, in the small closed space of the scene of the crime'.⁴⁸ This first point is strongly related to a central argument of my thesis, discussed in greater detail later, that the lives, bodies, locations, crimes and agonies of all those who become representations – even simply of history – are raw materials, converted simply into consumable matter, of equivalent value: mere information. The second point is relevant to my focus on space, although very different in its execution; it usefully transfers beyond Seltzer's conception to underline true crime's tight focus, its vanishingly narrow minuteness of attention. Seltzer's description of 'the small closed space of the scene of the crime' is read by this thesis *in terms of* the turning of the ordinary bedroom, the private space, *innately*, into a scene of a crime, the

⁴⁷ Williams, p.15 (opening lines).

⁴⁸ Seltzer, 2007, p. 6.

crime being the deviance retroactively applied to all aspects of a serial killer's life, in what Schmid calls 'the retrospective construction of deviance'.⁴⁹

He argues that

although the presumption of monstrosity in true crime narratives is necessary [...] to distance murderers from ordinary men, this presumption immediately creates a dilemma: [...] If killers appear to be ordinary men, how can we distinguish between "apparently" ordinary men who are "actually" killers and "really" ordinary men? The intractability of these questions [...] necessitates the] common feature of true crime narratives: the search for the origins of deviance.⁵⁰

Such a 'search for the origins of the killer's deviance in his childhood' – where 'modern true crime writers go looking for *details* in the killer's childhood that will allow them to claim that the seeds of monstrosity have been lurking, though cunningly disguised, in the killer since childhood' – is the means by which 'true crime [...] can undermine and demonize the murderer's apparent normality', allowing the reader the 'comfort' of a 'deterministic logic', which 'binds these children to their evil fate from their very earliest days[; ...] In the world of true crime [...] the lives of murderers are bound by an inexorable logic that leads them to their crimes.' He refers to this tendency as 'the "Had I but known" school of true crime', drily remarking that

If no suitably deviant episode exists, one can be constructed by going back to seemingly innocuous childhood incidents and reinterpreting them in the light of later events. [...] No matter how absurd this determinism may be, it has the advantage of making that apparently ordinary life as deviant as possible from the very beginning.⁵¹

I agree with Schmid that, despite a tendency to 'cast the criminal out of the social' in true crime, 'this move can never be performed cleanly or conclusively [...] because of

⁴⁹ Schmid, 2010, p.209.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.208.

⁵¹ Ibid., emphasis added.

culture's complex and ambivalent relationship with the figure of the criminal.⁵² Indeed, I would add that the two strands that Schmid proposes as typical of different historical and cultural periods of American true crime (ordinary/monster, killer as part of society/killer as ontologically Other) are more symbiotic than this dichotomy may imply. Despite its arguably conservative and un-rehabilitative overall slant, the genre's constant yoking together of the two inevitably provides the unspoken shadow narrative that *ordinariness is deviant, deviance is ordinary*, and that *violence is everyday*, and *the everyday is violent*. Even if this counter-narrative is present only as a gap, it is always present, providing fissures for reading against the grain, toe-holds to the opposite of ostensible meanings. Even where true crime can only show the outer edges of a crime, it is by showing those edges that outlines are drawn, inevitably giving the idea a form, a framework. Thus, many things that true crime provides as its apparently *incidental* and indeed superfluous enjoyments,⁵³ by their association offer possibilities for perceiving the criminal beyond the monster/ordinary dialectic – or rather, they *recast* that dialectic – they *recast the ordinary* in light of the killer.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ For example, vividness, physicality, space, class, landscape, sex, gender, the family, richness of detail of time and commodity and landscape and bodies, life writing about non-traditional biographical subjects, details of working-class culture and life, and possibilities of sexual identities and experiences beyond the rigidly heteronormative, and possibilities of counter forms of power in a deeply codified and unequal world. See below on David Stewart's theory of real crime narratives allowing an eroticism of the city that acts as an escape into a reformulated familiar.

⁵⁴ It is perhaps the *combination* of monstrosity and ordinariness itself – not the comforts or thrills offered by either – that creates the particular fascination/repulsion aura accruing to the celebrity killer. Schmid asserts that 'From the point of view of the modern true crime writer, stressing the monstrosity of murderers is also a practical necessity, solving as it does the problem of how to build a compelling narrative around such a dull and ordinary individual as the average killer. The presumption of the killer's monstrosity also dictates some more specific features of true crime narratives, many of which are driven by a desire to explain (or disavow) the killer's apparent ordinariness.' Schmid, 2010, p.207. Seltzer also theorises this tension, calling it the 'the violence-normality paradox'. Seltzer, 2007, pp. 40-4. We have seen this in action in Sparrow's switch and change in his description of Hindley and Brady as looking exactly like any other normal couple, only to undercut this assertion immediately with 'they were not [...] nor anything like it.' Sparrow, p.17. I would posit that these are examples of a structural generic technique in which the killer's ordinariness is initially built up to a great extent, purely in order to subvert it with revelations of monstrosity.

In the opening passage of *Beyond Belief*, Williams alternates blocks of descriptive writing, ordered by the types of physical landscape on which they focus.⁵⁵ First the cosy familiar suburbs, decried perhaps but dependable and homely, seen through his gaze; then over the spooky moorland of legend and threats to children, remembered from his childhood; then an aerial shot of Manchester as a whole (which of course is 'grey' and 'rainy' (p.15)).⁵⁶ We then descend into the streets, to gaze upon the ordinary business of the day in Manchester. Poster boards and cinemas and bingo clubs and hairdressers' salons speed by our gaze (encapsulating 'gaudy barbarism' by juxtaposing working-class affluence's leisure attractions with Dracula's gore-soaked coffin on the film poster) in rich, Hoggart-esque affective detail. After totalising generalities about Mancunians, in the exoticising terms of a (perhaps ironically-intended) faux-colonial safari ('the people are mostly a cheerful race' p.17), we zoom in on a matching 'Mr and Mrs' pair of figures that we suppose are Hindley and Brady, only to be tricked: they are merely another interchangeable couple, so typical are the criminals we are about to glimpse. Both sets are seen from outside, visually lingered upon, their hair, their clothes, while the visual mythology of Hindley and Brady's mugshots haunts both these figures and the ghostly childhood tales of the moorland before ('shadowy giants with staring eyes').⁵⁷ The specificity of their archival spectrality is set against their replaceable status as typical working-class youth at the time, ('he slim-legged with the pointed shoes and she with the bouffant hair, only blonde'): just one more matching set of alike-attired couples, preceded by their own doppelgängers of normality ('very like the other two') – a double-exposure overlap of the exceptional and dark within the typical and everyday.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Williams, pp.15-19.

⁵⁶ A sort of dark inverse of a magic carpet ride or the scenes in *The Snowman* or *The BFG* where the child is guided on an aerial tour.

⁵⁷ Williams, p.15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.18.

David Stewart posits that true crime and other real-crime-related forms have a long history of escapist reliance on the projection of an eroticism of the alienated city onto the quotidian urban landscape.⁵⁹ I would go further and suggest that this results in the embodiment of spaces and the spatialising of bodies in a manner that, as I argued at the start of this section, uses certain types of people and bodies to emblematises the region as a whole – in this case, emblematising the region *as* a thrilling, alienated, criminal space. Peter Messent characterises Stewart's 'Focus [as] on urban life and a rapidly expanding capitalist economy'.⁶⁰ Stewart posits that audience 'relish' as an affective response to crime reportage is a facet of popular 'ambivalence about criminality and its relation to the dominant social order' due to the way it 'eroticized urban experience', providing 'a necessary and thrilling release from the disciplinary procedures of capitalism' which 'for the vast majority of city-dwellers [are] constraining, confining, and mind-numbingly dull.'⁶¹

Stewart's argument also hints at the curatorial and evidential gazes upon which true crime relies. The precise measurements of the depth of razor slashes' he discusses as available in crime reportage form part of a curatorial, handling gaze that is visually and physically enthralled or reconstructive or conjuring.⁶² But he also proposes that the inclusion of excessive and irrelevant detail results in part from the genre's relationship with 'non-productive desires associated with violence', implying that the genre is in fact

⁵⁹ David M. Stewart, 'Cultural Work, City Crime, Reading Pleasure', *American Literary History* 9: 4, pp.676-701.

⁶⁰ Peter Messent, *The Crime Fiction Handbook* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ Messent p. 6; Stewart, p.684.

⁶² Stewart, p.685.

available to other functions than the evidential forensic gaze.⁶³ The merging of its twin impulses of evidence and narrative is reliant upon this closeness of vision. Although Stewart is making a point about the materiality of violence's effect on the body, and how this impinges on spaces, I would contend that for audiences the fascination with and pleasure of looking is not solely located in blood and gore. Rather, enjoyment of visual and affective depictions of living, unsuffering bodies, and of quotidian, apparently uneventful spaces, *within the framing context* of violence – bathed in the glow of violence – is also a key 'nonproductive desire'. The audience wants to see not only the blood on the carpet, but to see the carpet beneath the blood. And *both* desires are symptomatic of – and created by – the demands and opportunities of true-crime genres.

Interiors

The use of space in the opening flourishes of these texts entails a zooming in from macro to micro – transitioning from broad exterior to private, interior spaces. This creates a layering effect of both space and of knowledge, of intimacy. The reality effect discussed above is about creating a sense of realism and moving the reader with affective detail. These details help to establish a particular idea of the (domestic) spaces described as *already* inhabited by someone likely to commit murder, in which their deviance is already embedded. Presenting such spaces as an extension of the murderer's consciousness, with their possessions and environs as symbolic of their specific(ally fetishised) traits, depends on these people being at once ordinary and already marked out as Other.

⁶³ Ibid, p.684.

Beyond Belief's narrator reflects on Brady's autodidactic perusal of non-fiction. Rather than sources of self-improvement and intellectual attainment, he has chosen morally corrupting reading matter. A 'clear-eyed youth who is above his blighted surroundings' is imagined in Brady's stead in this scene, a double who is (sarcastically) described improving himself with his 'new book that he can ill afford'.⁶⁴ His choice of paths is presented as clear, between the highbrow bildungsroman of the fated artist and the lurid true crime of the hated criminal – a binary reiterated in Williams' image of the titillating sensationalist literature's 'two-facedness', which he compares to a 'music-hall mime[...] dressed and made up on one side as a professor and on the other as a pimp, the act finishing with the two apparently waltzing off together'.⁶⁵ The latter image, at once hypocritically encapsulating the criticisms leveled at true crime and 'new journalism' and undermining the very binary it claims to espouse, reveals that the choice of two paths – serious book or titillating thriller; exceptional portrait of the artist or exploitative account of the murderer – are actually, as Downing argues, not separate at all.⁶⁶ Books here serve as reality effect (implying that this is typically what working-class people read), whilst also emotionally tinging the scene with a sense of affective reality (creating sympathy and condescension towards the putative impoverished young scholar). At the same time, they construct space as an extension of the murderer's consciousness and populated accordingly: 'this is what *murderers* read, in rooms like *these*'.

The room in which the potential scholar/murderer reads is a painstakingly-described (yet self-consciously generic) grotty room, with a 'rag of a curtain over his cell window

⁶⁴ Williams, p. 104.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.107. Nevertheless, it is still the same face; neither is a disguise.

⁶⁶ Downing.

to shut out the hideous city day, [...] the standard fly-blown bulb [...] the cracked ceiling, [...] the one scraggy pillow' revealing, even ironically, the importance of domestic space to true crime. On the one hand it forms a domestic bubble, in true crime's generically-typical spatial iconography – a counterpoint to scary urban outdoors, in which streets are prowled by dangerous men, desperate sex workers and degenerate addicts, and yards, garages and streams are all potential locations of discovering – or dumping – a body. On the other, this counterpoint is set up only to be undermined – as indeed the reader knows all along it must be – by the intrusion of violence, or of the person of the killer, into that bubble. This double-edged depiction of interior domestic space is an example of the classic Freudian uncanny, or 'unheimlich' (unhomely), which reveals the darkness already inside the familiar, apparently-cosy, safe interior, and with which the signs of apparent cosiness have also been complicit all this time.

Somebody's Husband is divided into sections called 'House', 'Room', and 'Other Rooms', suggesting that ultimately there are only three spaces in the narrative, only three categories of possible space: himself, his space, and all other things. It is as if all physical space is overridden – *overwritten* – by Sutcliffe's self-absorbed perception of it, whilst also shaping his perceptions, his personality, in ways that are very much *not* homely.⁶⁷ Space is not space *in and of itself* but an atmosphere, an iconography, a mental state or miasma of ascribed subjectivity into which the reader enters: another form of Seltzer's crime scene minute tableaux.

⁶⁷ For example, the meat and animals and sexual encounters that seem to fill the house (carrying suggestions of impurity and mixed-ness within a classed setting), and the animosity and power struggle his father displays towards his mother.

The start of *Myra, Beyond Saddleworth* also adopts traditional true crime conventions (showing first landscape, then the killer's body, then the interior of their house, and then the news media) despite (or, as part of) being the opposite of 'true' crime. Rather, it is a speculative thought experiment: a novel about what could have happened if, rather than dying in prison, Hindley had been covertly released (a popular conspiracy theory). As such is deliberately *untrue crime*. Unlike true crime it reveals its own fictiveness through its own plausibility, drawing attention to exactly those conventions upon which true crime relies.

It opens with the moors.

From Manchester the road begins its climb towards the moors, stretching ahead on a colossal scale, three lanes up the hill and three lanes down, like a road built by the Nazis. M[yra] feels her stomach gripping with something like fear.

Morrison is right that this setting is a compulsory touch point in accounts of the case. As Birch suggests, presenting the Moors Murders as 'a kind of Gothic soap opera (with all the elements of fear, melodrama and histrionics that term implies)',⁶⁸ rests on the ways *Beyond Belief* spatially and materially constructs 'excess [through] the use of apocalyptic metaphor, the congruence of grimy backstreets, moors swathed in mist [... as a setting for the case's] psychodrama'.⁶⁹ Yet the moors of this opening scene are not the picturesque bleak moors of an (anachronistically-imagined) 1960s' hinterland, but the tarmac-crossed transit backdrops of the 2010s. The cut-off farmer whose marooned house 'M' laughs at as a relic from bygone times is much like herself: both cut-off and preserved, apart from a world moving on around them. Rather than the richly over-determined landscape of her true-crime time-capsule past, the moors *this* Myra faces

⁶⁸ Birch, p.33.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.34; Lee, pp.368-9.

offer a blankness unavailable for emotional resonance. When she looks to them for some sense of the case or her place in it she cannot see them or feel anything.

The domestic setting in which we encounter her is a house with which she has been provided by the government. Its trappings are as clearly placed in terms of class as those of her true crime interiors, but of *now* not the 1960s. The novel places her in a recognisable working-class aspirational domestic context, but one outside the 'brand' or iconography of the Moors Murders legend. In both however, the horror resides in her anonymity, her ordinariness – that she could be anyone. This uneasily juxtaposed normality and murder, combined with a sense of time's having rewritten their legend's iconicity, recurs in the next chapter. Brady, thinking she is dead, reminisces about their time together and reflects upon the ordinariness of their relationship:

Things weren't the way people thought between them. Most of the time they had laughs together, like any normal couple. There were days, months of days when there was no blood, no death. Days when they went up to the moors and drank cold white wine, watching the wind shiver through the tussocky grass; days when they ate their tea at the kitchen table and then held hands on the sofa, listening to tapes of The Goons while her gran was at the bingo.⁷⁰

This ordinariness cuts against the public desire for disavowal, which affords these killers a static, sealed-off ontological separateness from ourselves. This technique of enumeration presents a catalogue of physical objects: tangible elements of landscape, interior, bodies and commodities for us in the form of grass, wine, table, hands, sofa, tapes, bingo. We are given these instead of, for example, thoughts, dreams, feelings, or even sensations of sex, pain or pleasure. Instead we see an arranged, closed tableaux of their exteriors palmed off *as* interiors: their ordinariness, their knowability, displayed through furniture and quotidian routines of meals.

⁷⁰ Rafferty, p.12.

In texts depicting Hindley and Brady their time is split between two spatial poles: urban outsiders in a wild rugged rural landscape, inscribing their legend onto the moors, and fashionable, aspirational home-makers in a society that greatly endorsed these values, living with Gran and the dogs, interested in furnishings – killing Edwards Evans in their own living room with Hindley's grandmother asleep upstairs. Indeed, the space depicted functions less as itself, even given the reality-effect, and more as a key element to both the narratives of the Moors Murders and of the Yorkshire Ripper – the paradoxical domesticity and utter otherness of the spaces presented; the familiar yet anxiety-fraught public leisure spaces in which the contemporary account written by Judge Gerald Sparrow after attending their trial depicts Hindley and Brady:

The [...] stock clerk and the girl with ash blonde hair [...] were so typical in appearance of two modern young urban workers that the public, expecting perhaps something bizarre, were startled. These were the young couple one might see at the bingo club, at the films, at the dog racing, or shopping at the supermarket on a Saturday morning.⁷¹

Spaces of working-class mid-century affluence and aspiration provoked paternalist claims that working people free to make their own choices would *get it wrong* somehow, wanting too much and of the wrong things, acting against their (alleged) own interests. As Biressi notes, Hindley and Brady were available as metonyms for social fears of 'shiny barbarism' that specifically accrued to visions of a feckless working class run crassly and vulgarly amok, which cultural commentators and others could use to

⁷¹ Sparrow, p.17 (4th sentence of first page). The class and gender elements are writ large from the very first sentence of his account, entitled 'A Monster': 'Myra Hindley was a kidnapper, a torturer and a monster, who murdered to gratify a terrible sexual lust for pain to which she had been introduced by Ian Brady, a tally clerk.' Hindley is saddled with the sole weight of their crimes, while Brady is purely his job, his class indicator; his presence merely tacked on at the end as an 'explanation' of how Hindley could have behaved as she did – as if the crimes were all her doing and he merely an inert catalyst. There is no indication from this that he *also* tortured, kidnapped and murdered. (Ibid.)

castigate a class as a whole.⁷² Hansford Johnson, for example, seems to be as worried by this 'gaudy' spectacle as she is of the actual violence for which Brady and Hindley were arrested, complaining about 'swinging society[']s [...] garish circus of [...] new freedom[s] to revel, through all kinds of mass media, in violence, in pornography.'⁷³ Their bodies and the spaces in which they are depicted emphasise an 'appearance of ultra-normality [which] was misleading to an almost gruesome point.'⁷⁴ Like Williams's opening scene that generalises them by showing us the wrong couple at first, this renders them un-exceptional – but only in order to subvert this apparent aim by exceptionalising them again – the fact they looked normal is all the more horrifying, because 'they were not [...] nor anything like it.'⁷⁵ Rafferty's depiction of Hindley and Brady themselves as inhibiting 'ordinary' bodies and spaces seems less classist than Sparrow's; being typical does not mean being lesser or worse; the horror derives from the *value* of the ordinary being undermined by the killer as the ultimate abject destroyer of worth, rather than from its lack of value or legitimacy in the first place. Williams exploits such metonymisations of mass culture and violence when he renders the killer un-exceptional only to re-exceptionalise them.

As discussed above, at the time of Hindley and Brady's crimes, restrictions on 'obscene' publications had only just recently been relaxed. The Obscene Publications Act was explicitly contested at Hindley and Brady's trial in 1965, occurring amid an atmosphere of anxiety around the feared collapse of the family, new contraceptive

⁷² 'If Brady and Hindley seemed to embrace (along with many other working-class people) the 'shiny barbarism' of the new permissive society, they also became a gaudy emblem of that barbarism'. Anita Biressi, *Crime, fear, and the law in true crime stories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.67.

⁷³ Hansford Johnson, p.17.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

measures and decriminalisation of homosexuality;⁷⁶ a loss of old apparent certainties apparently creating new (and eroding restraints on old) disruptive sexual impulses.⁷⁷ As my Introduction discusses, when Brady was confronted at trial with the accusation that his library constituted a 'sink of pornography', he foregrounded class in his response: 'there are better collections in lords' manors all over the country'.⁷⁸ This centring of the so-called 'pornographic' recurs in both discourses of real-life crime and of its generically specific re/construction in true crime.⁷⁹ Brady's reading materials are described in *Beyond Belief* as hypocritically claiming intellectualism whilst, for example, featuring cover art of a nude woman holding a whip, suggesting the narrative's alleged historical examination of Nazi torture was a flimsy cover for sadomasochistic erotica.⁸⁰ Williams describes this cover in lingering detail and quotes passages of sample text, ostensibly to illustrate this point. Apparently 'pornography' (in its most loosely-defined sense) is to blame for serial killers, but, also, the category into which true-crime representations of these killers must be placed: a construction suggesting (fears of) a kind of cyclical proliferation of depravity. There is also, however, the more subversive implication that these texts can give us information, pleasures, and even inculcate skills, that other kinds of text cannot. These illicit knowledges are unsanctioned, unofficial, 'outsider' accounts of power and pleasure: offering glimpses of different narratives about class, rebellion,

⁷⁶ The Wolfenden Report of 1957 recommended decriminalising sex between consenting adult males (although legislation was not passed until 1967).

⁷⁷ This reveals itself also in Hansford Johnson's account of the moors murders, in which 'the notion of permissiveness is [...] wedded to notions of misdirected sexual drives, of sexual desire that has escaped the confines of the family and domesticity [...] symptomatic of an 'affectless society' in which any emotional investment is refused'. Biressi, p.69; Hansford Johnson, p.35.

⁷⁸ Lee, p.273.

⁷⁹ Not, of course, that all representation of sex constitutes pornography.

⁸⁰ Williams, p.107.

edge, sex, power and how society works, than we might find in other genres, even other 'real life' accounts.⁸¹

Williams's presentation of Brady's reading material demonstrates true crime's tendency to only show sexuality disguised as violence or moral exemplar, as suggested by the image of the professor/sex worker composite. So, the idea of information being 'misused' by writers and readers of such titillating Nazi pulp novels shows a narrow and morally-tinged idea of what history is 'for'. As Murley describes, from the first both true crime's content and self-description are contradictory and confused: '[true crime] magazines always gave a thoroughly mixed message, one that offered a confusing commentary on the nature of criminal violence.'⁸² Consequently true crime both incidentally constructs *and relies upon* quasi-nonconsensual grey areas, avoiding the direct depiction of *either* consensual sex *or* abuse, in which scenes can be read for pleasure as well as gesturing towards the horror of crimes without openly representing them. Thus, affective reality has an historical weight, an integral inescapable part of the books depicted within true-crime texts, both as a reality effect, and as affective, and as standing in for the murderer's consciousness.

Laura Browder contrasts 'the sex' and 'the existential' in true crime, claiming that these are separate and contrasting impulses. I would argue, on the contrary, that they are interconnected.⁸³ This false dichotomy is vividly brought to life in Williams's part-

⁸¹ A fictional dramatisation of this tendency occurs in Stevan Alcock's *Blood Relatives* (London: HarperCollins, 2015), a novel about coming of age in 1970s Leeds, against which various political struggles, the emergence of Punk, and the Ripper case form the backdrop. The protagonist Alex first realises he is gay from watching a news report about the murder of a male sex worker (pp.21-2), a realisation immediately followed by his musings on the Moors Murders case.

⁸² Murley, p25.

⁸³ Laura Browder, 'True Crime', *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Ibid, 'Dystopian Romance: True Crime and the Female Reader',

professor-part-sex-worker figure that represents sensationalist literature about (for example) Nazi war crimes,⁸⁴ something of a bold accusation in a text that itself contains breathless passages describing the young Brady's masturbatory practises. The 'two-faced' image however reveals the very illusoriness of its own binary: the titillating and the educational are merely disguises of true crime; its real energies and activities lie in both and neither. The pimp/teacher figure may reveal the author's own anxiety about or, perhaps, a playful celebration of, true crime's status and what it is perceived to be or do. There is within this unease a fear of autodidactic learning as a form of disobedient reading, both in itself and as a class issue, but also of the potentially subversive possibilities of true crime that inevitably occupy the same space as its moralising (neatly encapsulated in Williams's image). The use of the term 'pornography' and analogies of sex work for true crime also suggests a tacit yet unacknowledged awareness of the kind of physical fetishisation both these murderers, and their victims, are subject to in these texts.

Like the Janus face of Brady's reading materials, the repeated trope of the gruesome Victorian Catholic waxworks that Sutcliffe was allegedly obsessed with (depicted in *Somebody's Husband*, and *Portrait*, amongst others) provide both a graphic warning against venereal disease and propaganda for moral and physical hygiene and as entertainment. Their tableaux constitute a horrorshow in which, peering over Sutcliffe's shoulder, the reader/viewer, through these carnival-cum-surveillance artefacts, is privy to spectacles outside their quotidian realm. The image raises echoes of contemporary

The Journal of Popular Culture, 39: 6 (New York: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 928–953.

Her theorisation of pornography in the latter is, however, censorious, normative and vague.

⁸⁴ Williams, p.107.

distrust of ‘end of pier’ gruesome/pornographic working-class entertainments.⁸⁵ As I discussed in my introduction, Hansford Johnson suggested links between the Moors Murders and both ‘pornography[,] and the British Realist theatre of Shelagh Delaney, Brendan Behan and Harold Pinter’, saying that neither should be available to ‘minds educationally and emotionally unprepared’.⁸⁶ A direct fear of working-class art and working-class learning, and, moreover, of working-class self-directed study and disobedient readership, is transparently revealed in how short the mental leap is between murder, erotica and all art, if it involves the working-classes. Johnson’s words reveal an underlying perversion or skewing of what working-class people are or are ‘for’ – that not only must any art they make be virtually porn but also any murder they commit must be the result of their minds being unable to ‘properly’ use porn – because, in her discourse, they *are* bodies not minds.

A Bit Of The Other: The Northern Body

As I have discussed, true crime focuses on bodies and the ways in which those bodies are put to use, displayed, placed, etc. Northientalist discourses also share this focus, presenting the Northern subject as *just* their body – their *inherently classed and gendered* body, inscribed with ‘Northern-ness’. Furthermore, this inscribed Northern-ness is the consequence of the fetishisation of types of bodies, or bodily attributes, projected onto represented figures through a kaleidoscopic palette of stock types – aspirational criminal, dour intellectual musician or political activist, ‘muck and brass’ self-made man, chippy class-conscious rebel, unlikely Casanova, ‘bit of rough’, rolling-

⁸⁵ *Portrait* has the waxworks segment following directly on from the opening masturbation scene in which Sutcliffe is presented arranged in his mirror. Thus these two tableaux are also mirrors: first his body on display for our entertainment then their bodies on display for his.

⁸⁶ Lee, p.267; Hansford Johnson, p.18.

pin-wielding matriarch, earthly salt-of-the-earth barmaid, etc – at the expense of specificity, individualities and other kinds of bodies and stories.⁸⁷ This section asks how the myths of these killers draw on a set of cultural tropes about Northerners that objectify them in various ways, including economically, comedically and sexually. This form of othering makes the process of reification obvious at the same time as it elides it with its apparent (over) specificity, and which has a history and a trajectory of its own that is then carried into future uses of myths arising from it.

In his iconic yet problematic work on class and cultural consumption in mid-twentieth-century Britain, Richard Hoggart describes the archetypical working-class couple, the nucleus of the heteronormative family unit, factory models of classed humanity, neatly split into a binary set: matching masculinity and femininity, innate, biological. While Hoggart does not propose such a thing, this suggests a kind of cultural-materialist predeterminism, where the dye is cast in both inherent characteristics and inevitable life path. There are types of bodies, types of faces, with the nature of class written on them, and those are working-class bodies. Middle and upper class bodies are not required, apparently, to announce themselves thus:

Like his wife, a working-class man often seems to me almost physically recognisable. He tends to be small and dark, lined and sallow about the face by the time he has passed thirty. The bone-structures of the face and neck then shows clearly, with a suggestion of the whippet about it. [...] these physical marks are observable early, and remain throughout life. Thus [...] if I or some of my professional acquaintances who were born into the working-classes put on the sort of flat cap and neckerchief which go with looking 'county' [...] the sit of the cap and the neckerchief, or the structure of the bones round the neck make us look, not like the sporting middle-classes, but like working-men on a day off.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Overlapping the Freudian and the Marxist forms of fetishism.

⁸⁸ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life* (originally 1957, this edition London: Penguin, 2009) p. 39.

This description is extremely specific, yet instantly recognisable as a constant of cultural images of Northern-ness and of working-class-ness, despite the many alternative Northern stereotypes immediately available. It simultaneously co-exists with, and purports to cancel out, all other concurrently existent and circulating cultural narratives. Hoggart's use of whippets and flat caps to describe some essential physical essence of working-class masculinity is both symptomatic of – and itself instrumental in – the cultural associations enshrining these as tropes of working-class-ness and the North to such an extent that they have become comedy props of fancy dress costumes – as well as genuine pursuits and fashion choices of real people in these contexts and beyond. True or not, distorted and proliferated into humour or not, *this* North is *the image* of Northern-ness in its purest concentration; the core of the imaginary Northerner: the gendered, particularised body of the North.



Pete McKee's artwork, pictured above painted on the side of Fagan's public house in Sheffield, presents an example of this cultural logic operating in the open in a self-celebrating intra-Northern display of sexuality embodied and marked by its cultural milieu in dress and physique of the stereotypical gendered set of Northern bodies: Hoggart's 'Mr and Mrs' literally inscribed onto the landscape for which it speaks.⁸⁹ In contrast, normativity is invisible, unmarked. In the quotation above, Hoggart's middle class person forms an absent yardstick against which working-class men can be measured and found wanting – 'they' are what 'we' are not.

The sexualised Northerner is both flipside and continuation of the comedy Northerner: both are part of the same process that deprives the subject of full humanity, equality, complexity. This totalising touristic gaze objectifies in the most literal sense: rendering the gazed-upon an object of derision and/or an object of desire. Both humour and lust trap their object in an externally-defined, cumbersome, unavoidable body, always in the frame and always the first thing noticed; a position reserved for the abject, for those society mocks and/or fetishizes: those defined by a physical use. When one is visible only as a body, one is invisible as a person; placed always on display, but only from certain angles. Other aspects of identity are elided, and other versions of Northern-ness hidden behind a spectacle of homogeneity, appearing to speak for (or on behalf of) all Northerners – a speech, however, composed of carefully choreographed silence(s), a portrait showing the face of a poster-boy, only in a certain light and pose, unaged and singular. In this respect Hindley is the Dorian Gray of Northern excess (indeed Rafferty depicts her making this comparison herself in *Myra, Beyond Saddleworth*) – but, if so,

⁸⁹ Pete McKee, *The Snog* (2014) [<http://www.petemckee.com>] [ACCESSED: 27/03/2015].

Brady is the portrait in the attic, withering before our eyes into a visual spectre of iniquity.

The Body Of The Killer

True crime's focuses on situating and displaying bodies in space within a codified set of generic expectations is elegantly summarised in Donna Tartt's novel *The Secret History*'s brief evocation of a fictional example: 'rainy night; deserted street; fingers closing around the lovely neck of Victim Number Four'.⁹⁰ These key elements are physical: location and atmosphere providing the backdrop (weather, urban setting) for the body of the killer and victim to intersect on opposite axes as the locus of the crime. Their repeatable generality is also a feature of the genre's stereotypical penchant for vagueness aligned with a simultaneous specificity: the seriality and anonymity of 'Victim Number 4'; the agentless clause of the killer's actions suggesting their paradoxical presence as an absence that simultaneously suffuses the crime like an uncontainable vapour, and yet at the same time is nothing *but* a minutely specific physical presence: the fingers of a killer. As we might expect from the kind of close attention and specificity typically given to the cases' furnishings and food, their news, entertainment, commerce, landscapes and spaces, so too are the physical details of the bodies, clothes and grooming choices of those involved subject also to the genre's lens of minute scrutiny. This puts the reader in a voyeuristic position, but also, as is typical of the gaze, of being powerful compared to the subject of that gaze – or, rather, perhaps, being used as an instrument of power – policing the killers' actions like a night watchman, a prying eye, an agent of the surveillance gaze.

⁹⁰ Donna Tartt, *The Secret History* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 312.

The eighth chapter of *Beyond Belief* stages a 14-year-old Ian Brady watching himself masturbate in an angled mirror whose reflection obscures his face to focus on his genitals and buttocks; the face then functions as an out of focus voyeuristic presence (much like the reader's role).⁹¹ The object apparently is one entirely of narcissism, self-love, physical attraction to his own body:

Systematic as always, he wedges his one chair against his bedroom door, lifts the shabby swivel-mirror from the chest-of-drawers, and sets it on the lino. Then he takes off all his clothes except his singlet, lays them neatly on the bed, sits on the lino in front of the mirror, pulls the singlet up under his arms, then swivels the mirror to such an angle that from his eye-line his middle is in the foreground while somewhere up in the background a face returns his own peeping-Tom grin. Strong white teeth. Then, methodically assuming poses, some facing the mirror and some with his lower back to it, he watches himself make love to himself.⁹²

Williams emphasises, again, shabbiness, squalor, poverty ('his one chair', 'the shabby [...] mirror', 'lino', his 'singlet'), pinning the scene into a generic yet particular milieu. He does this throughout the book, consistently creating contrast between Brady as exceptional through unusual fastidiousness and refinement (or the wish to appear refined to others) and out of place. This trope, however, simultaneously seals him within that very place, marking him as a figure against a quotidian backdrop: an enemy within.⁹³ In the scene-setting quoted above, this singularity and isolation and a fastidious nature ('systematic as always', 'methodically' 'neatly') contrasted *against* the

⁹¹ Entitled 'Queue up for Exhibit Number One'. Williams, pp.77-87.

⁹² Williams, p. 82.

⁹³ Burn also uses this technique to construct Sutcliffe, creating a stereotypically working-class 'northern by numbers' background for him in counterpoint to which his personal affectations and foibles can be drawn. Burn, 1984, pp.51-2; 57.

typical, ordinary, scuffed and unimpressive room, creating a sense of his importance, heightening his exoticisation (and eroticisation).⁹⁴

Brady's bedroom mirror scene functions as the centrepiece (one could almost say the centrefold) of the chapter, and immediately follows a scene in which several young boys at Brady's school compare penises, look at a pornographic image together, possibly indulging in mutual masturbation (implied but not stated outright). Focus is drawn pointedly to the pictorial penis, immediately leading into an anecdote allegedly transcribed verbatim from a candid former friend; the account's attempt at dialect does not so much create the illusion of authenticity as the opposite – a feeling of falseness and ventriloquism, as if Williams had just impersonated a Scottish accent in place of a genuine witness. This performativity tugs the thread of theatricality running through both Williams's style more generally and specifically the language applied to Brady's penile display in this episode:

a ringleader calls out "Look who's in the corner all on his Sloansome!" an' it was Sloany,⁹⁵ drawin' on his fag like he was a Provost in a pigsty. Come on they call, see if ye can beat poor old Ladyfinger, come on Big Lassie, show the gang! [...] Sloany says, in one o' them quiet voices on the fillums that stop everything i' the saloons "OK" he says, "OK".⁹⁶ Now in this game nobody ever said OK, ye pretended to struggle like a steer, this wasna right. Then he plants the fag between his teeth so as to leave both hands free an' then he goes into the imitation he was allus doin', o' that big chap in *The Third Man* an' he says "What can I show ye, gentlemen?" "Yer cock mate" somebody says and we roared. "OK" says Sloany. An' them, as slow as the slow motion on the flicks, he runs his zip doon an' then, as if he was unpackin' somethin' o' value out of a crate, fag still in

⁹⁴ *Portrait* likewise presents the idea of a 'systematic' autoerotic ritual (as an aspect of fastidiousness and, particularly, control) in the laying out of Sutcliffe's tools. I also discuss the use of this technique in a screen contest, using the character of Bob Craven, in Chapter Two.

⁹⁵ A nickname based on Brady's former surname, Sloan.

⁹⁶ Drawing attention to both the novel's own status as intertextual cultural construct and entertainment, and also to Brady's self-fashioning through cultural consumption.

his mouth mind you, smoke up into his eyes, he takes it oot without a word. And for a growin' lad it was bonny. An' no' even awake, which didna seem right.⁹⁷ Weel we had to give him credit, "Sloany's in the finals, hot favourite[...]"⁹⁸ "Thanks" says Sloany, an' takes a drag at his fag. An' then, if you please, he slowly bends his knees [...] an' brings out the entire box o' tricks as it were, the brazenest action I ever seen by any boy or mon in me life [...] we was a row of mesmerised rabbits i' front of a conjurer.⁹⁹ A bunch o' kids oot of our depth. "Finished wi' me gentlemen?" he says, an' packs the property away again, ye expected him to fish oot a key an' lock it up an' flick the combination. [...] nobody brought the subject up thereafter. But ye couldna forget it. He was respected for provin' his manhood errly, but there was somethin' in the way he done it that stuck in the gullet. I do remember thinkin', though, well no problem for Sloany when he grows up, not like poor auld Ladyfinger.¹⁰⁰

Brady's role in this scene is ambiguous: both a voyeur and yet apparently sexually unmoved, he shows more of his anatomy to the others than is customary in their 'play' (implying this was a regular occurrence), but rather than submit to a pretend struggle chooses to display himself on his own terms. He seems uninterested, or at least wishing to give that impression, but his fellow cock-comparer, through whose words we see this scene, actively eroticises his account, giving the narrative a flavour of sexual fantasy; the reader is placed in shared subjectivity with someone objectifying the teenage Brady. The friend, despite (clearly deliberately constructed by Williams as weak) protestations

⁹⁷ His lack of sexual engagement in the experience is somehow a signal of his lack of authenticity or naturalness, or a marker of difference. It places the emphasis on power rather than sex, per se, and makes his motivation more complex and obscure, thus more suspect, than simply immediate physical gratification.

⁹⁸ This phrasing suggests a competitive sport; rather than mere mutual enjoyment: this is a hierarchical performance (as with the workplace porn indictment in *Somebody's Husband*). It becomes something you can 'do wrong', a performance that can be panned, despite the largely involuntary nature of any of the attributes being measured – and the extent of predetermination of who is the winner or loser. However, it also provides an opportunity for the less obviously impressive males (in terms of physical strength or physique) to triumph. Just as Sutcliffe's father attempts to find consolation for his son's 'weedy' physique in recounting the transformation of a thin acquaintance by army life into a 'muscle man', so here, in this ritualised sexual display, apparently impressive boys can be found lacking in their final reckoning, and physical primacy awarded those who previously have felt physically slighted – replacing one fetishistically narrow definer of embodied male accomplishment and success with another, just as the fetishised celebrity killer is simply a displaced and distorted version of normative masculine ideals of mastery.

⁹⁹ The language of magic and theatrics recurs: his testicles are referred to as a 'box of tricks', and displaying his penis renders his friends 'mesmerised rabbits i' front of a conjurer. A bunch o' kids oot of our depth' in a knowing and deeply sinister echo of his future sexual crimes against children.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, p.80-82.

otherwise, seems aroused and impressed watching this display. It also garners Brady the 'respect' of his peers; he is seen as having 'proved his manhood early' by having a large penis and being prepared to show it to his school-fellows, with – and this seems key to the respect it affords him – no stimulation, or any kind of emotional engagement other than self-regard. The epigram to the chapter Williams uses is:

I'm in love wi' Somebody
An' that Somebody is Me . . .
*Pop Song*¹⁰¹

The chapter's title, 'Queue Up For Exhibit Number One', combines connotations of frivolous sideshow entertainment, a display of artistic, scientific or historical interest, and a piece of evidence in a criminal court. This is entirely fitting for the combination of the book's themes of exploitative, lurid titillation, projected detachment and scientific/historical record-keeping, aestheticising and commodifying this process of surveillance and appeals to the workings of law and order. The exhibit we are invited to queue for, as a paying audience eager to witness marvels and horrors, is Brady's first tentative forays into crime and sexuality. The invitation itself positions the reader as temporarily occupying the space of the working-class consumer of tawdry, morally dubious mass-entertainments – the 'gaudy trinkets' of Hoggart and Hansford Johnson's mid-century anxiety.¹⁰²

The development of criminality and sexuality are inextricably linked in the logic of Williams' novel, and particularly in the chapter considered above, in that they are seen to be simultaneously nascent. Brady's non-sexual criminal career finds its genesis in

¹⁰¹ Williams p.77. I posit he is being deliberately vague in his citation in service of the intertext milieu he constructs to synthesise and re-enact a generic working-class mid-twentieth-century pop-cultural setting.

¹⁰² Hoggart; Hansford Johnson, p.17; critiqued by Biressi pp.67-73.

chapter 8, and a link is posited between the two 'genres' of crime, as it were, with sexual transgression figured in terms of property crime:

After two sharp knocks at their door, [... Brady's foster parents] were only relieved there hadn't been a third bobby to say there was a lass round the corner [...] cryin' her eyes out an' her dad fit to tie, man to man Mr Sloan but this time your laddie's broke into more than a hoose . . . No, in that line of country Ian wasn't involved with a soul [...] what a blessing.

It is unclear from the context whether Williams is implying that Brady could have impregnated a girl consensually or raped her. Indeed the distinction does not appear to matter, as the purpose is rather to provide a vague image of trouble in interacting sexually with other people (specifically of the opposite sex) with which to compare his solo sex-life, which is set up as *apparently* less worrying, only to undercut this and so create irony:

The blessing had a simple explanation. Ian was involved with himself. Every boy at his age has at recurring moments an interest in his own body; but this was not interest. It was love.

[...]

Nothing wrong, you'll never find the police at your door for it. But for your own guid, laddie, grow out of it.¹⁰³

Whether the hypothetical crying girl had been raped or impregnated, either way it seems to be a property issue: her father is angry 'fit to be tied' because of damage to his possession. Presenting both as the typical hijinks a growing boy with little regard for other people's property could get up to implies rape is simultaneously more and less important than having 'broken into' a 'hoose' (a graphic but also distanced comparison from an act of sexual violence).¹⁰⁴ Women/the young are figured as property, since their sexual chastity and/or bodily autonomy can be stolen, not from them, but from their elders and those who 'own' them. This provides a haunting echo of Sutcliffe's charge of

¹⁰³ Williams, p.77; p.82.

¹⁰⁴ Or it is possible perhaps that Williams may be *making the point* that the difference is not seen as important.

'going equipped for theft'¹⁰⁵ when arrested in the red light district with a hammer prior to his known assaults. However, the centrality of property as the ultimate concern also provides an image of communities in real economic hardship: for the miscreant and victim alike, and their families, shame and trauma are free of charge, whereas a fine or being forced to replace stolen or broken items (either in compensation or to repair your loss) are immediately economically punitive.¹⁰⁶

Williams's focus on Brady's autoerotic practises is particularly lopsided when we remember the pains he takes to emphasise the force and excess of Hindley's erotic obsession with Brady. Yet in her case this is presented as floridly romantic rather than foregrounded as sexual. She is depicted writing a diary, and mooning about in her bedroom ('on fire' for him), yet without parallels to the autoerotic situations in which he is shown; she seems to lack a body altogether in such moments. Such texts find the masturbating male killer to be a *representable unrepresentable*, while the female killer goes beyond this into the incoherent and silent - not even signalling its own disavowal so much as completely refuting the notion altogether. This may indeed be intended to make a point about (social mores of) female and male sexuality - in that Brady is supposedly just already a(n excessively) sexual being anyway, whereas Hindley is a 'vessel' that without him would have no such desires - only be activated by a catalyst, without innate psychosexual subjectivity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Burn, 1984, p.100.

¹⁰⁶ Clearly trauma is liable to have long-term economic effects on individuals and communities, but the immediate cost is far less apparent upfront. As we can see, the myths and narratives about these individuals actively contribute to the perpetuation and exacerbation of rape culture.

¹⁰⁷ As Downing argues, Williams describes Hindley as 'in a state of abeyance. As unconscious as an empty goblet waiting to be filled to the brim', suggesting that 'A young woman—any young woman—is a tabula rasa in this discourse, waiting to be written on by the man who will shape her destiny. The metaphor Williams chooses of a vessel "waiting to be filled" is surely pointedly sexual, suggesting the means by which the man will do the shaping: sexual penetration leading to impregnation. This half-life of achievement- by-proxy, then, is the woman's lot, her permitted options woefully limited in ambition and

The inclusion of these scenes unremarkably depicts sexual self-exploration as part of coming of age, but here also functions as a trope to indicate radical selfishness: Brady is conveyed as a closed loop, with a self-sustaining feedback system – metaphorically suggesting a way of experiencing the world as only props in his own self-dramatisation and sexual(ised) mastery over external stimuli. Williams may on the one hand titillate readers with salacious details and, on the other, play upon the fears of homophobic and/or sexually insecure readers by dramatising a connection between playful teenage same-sex experimentation described and the rapist-murderer we know Brady became. The first scene in which we encounter Peter Sutcliffe in *Peter: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (2011) depicts Sutcliffe staring at his own face in a mirror whilst masturbating, standing in the bathroom of his wife's house, an adult and already a serial killer. He looks into his own eyes, and, as the camera angle (so viewer's perspective) shifts; he appears to meet the viewer's gaze. If being gazed at is culturally associated with the qualities of passivity and femininity (and in Hindley's case her direct and unflinching projected gaze is key to her troubling power as a signifier) then Sutcliffe disrupts this by also being an object that is gazed upon. For much of the scene the focus is at crotch-level and he has no head. When we do see his face it projects a level, intense gaze, appearing to see and contain the audience. Our power of looking is subverted back upon us, the darkness always visually emphasised. The way we only see his midsection for most of the scene is also very similar to Williams' description of Brady's mirror: 'from his eye-line his middle is in the foreground while somewhere up in the background a face returns his own peeping-Tom grin'. *Portrait's* autoerotic scene differs

range.' Williams, p.127; Downing, p.104. I would go on to suggest that by Williams's conception, a woman's lot is so empty and so in need of a man that even her own sexuality, even her own body, are of no use to her, *cannot be used by her*, without a man to take charge of these items – unlike Brady, whose body and sexuality are explicitly and repeatedly foregrounded as not only his own to use as he sees fit, but, too much so, the root of his downfall, ('for your own guid, laddie, grow out of it.' p.82).

from that of *Beyond Belief* in that Brady is depicted as a teenager whilst Sutcliffe is as a grown man. Rather, then, than the presentation *Beyond Belief* provides of a retrospectively tainted before-time haunted by its future, Sutcliffe's scene is the appalling vista of what spatially is at a remove,¹⁰⁸ but, temporally, is all around him.

The masturbation scenes involve both Sutcliffe and Brady regarding themselves in mirrors and obtaining sexual pleasure from their own appearance, gaze, and physicality. These are predominantly focalised through an imaginary viewer rather than the characters themselves: both characters are closed, unintelligible, partially permeable only under these specifically codified, staged circumstances. In neither case are readers given a sense of their fantasy worlds; rather, we are voyeurs. While Brady is on display, stripped and posed, for his own (and by extension the reader's) perusal,¹⁰⁹ in *Portrait* Sutcliffe is fully clothed,¹¹⁰ staring into only his own eyes, directly in communion with his inner self, impermeable from outside. The reader's enforced voyeurism of Brady – who we know as rapist and murderer of children in adult life – becomes uncomfortably juxtaposed with our own position 'watching' him, as a child exploring his own sexuality in a way that is deliberately situated for a viewer. It is as if Williams has set up a *mise-en-scène* – stocked with reality-effect *and* affective details – to trick the reader into watching the live underage Brady show. Perhaps he attempts to demonstrate our culpability as an audience in the creation of murderers as celebrities. There is certainly a link between the repetition and similarity of these scenes and the nineteenth-century sexology discussed by Foucault and Downing – the young man in moral and physical

¹⁰⁸ He killed no-one in his own home, as far as is known.

¹⁰⁹ Indeed the selectively framed nakedness is foregrounded, with his eyes and face (loci of identity) in the background as an(other) observer of himself – or rather both himself – as both the performer and the gratified onlooker.

¹¹⁰ This is clearly at least in part due to the constraints of mainstream film; certainly the rating would be different if something directly comparable to Williams's description of Brady were filmed.

danger of deformation and corruption through masturbation. Williams explicitly links moral and sexual development: 'Fourteen is the average age for the assessment not only of the sexual future, but of the mental and moral outlook.'¹¹¹

Homoeroticism is emphasised in the mirrored contortions Brady performs to view his own body, as if he were two people. In his sinister grin, wolfish 'strong white teeth' and voyeur's lurking smirk in the background of his own sexual mise-en-scène, it is as if Brady is not only stimulating himself directly but also indirectly abusing himself. It is as if this looming face in the periphery of the mirror is the ghost of his future self, haunting his earliest sexual self-discovery – as if the seeds of his destruction are sown (again referring to masturbation as corrupting or enabling a degrading self-mythologising and self-fashioning). This seems to set up the penis-comparison scene as innocent same-sex voyeurism, contrasting with later depravity, whilst simultaneously foreshadowing it through Brady's insistence on that detached, controlling smirk. Brady's school friend sees 'something about the way' he wrestled control from the 'ringleaders' by his elaborate show of aloof disinterest in such harmless enjoyments as sinister and as a miserly determination to keep what pleasure he could give solely for himself – indicated by the language of wealth, property, locks, keys and theft in that section. This implication, combined with Williams's suggestion that Brady is in love with himself, would support the latter interpretation as the image of him the text projects. The jarringly arch sexualised depiction of teenage masturbation mapped onto a fictional Brady – in which he performs as both sexualised child and deviant threat – shows without showing. Williams is able to display the sexual allure of a child without alluding openly to it or enacting Brady and Hindley's victims' suffering, allowing him to engage

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (vol. 1) (originally 1976, this edition London: Penguin, 1998); Downing; Williams, p.83.

with our discomfort at witnessing underage objectification to foreground the horror of their crimes without invoking them directly. The body of the killer stands in for those of their victims.

Temporality: Historical Abuse

‘the past isn’t what you think it is’

– Luke Haines, *Art Will Save The World*.¹¹²

‘the only new thing in the world is the history you don't know’

– Harry S. Truman, quoted as the epigram from *Nineteen Seventy Four*, the opening line of the ‘Red Riding’ quartet.

This section will focus on fictional written representations of the ‘Moors Murders’ and ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ cases. I will be using examples from David Peace’s ‘Red Riding Quartet’ of novels, Andrea Ashworth’s *Once In A House On Fire* (1998), *Death of a*

¹¹² A point that David Peace reiterates in one of his interview segments in this documentary. *Art Will Save The World* (Neil McCann, 2012).

Murderer by Rupert Thomson (2007), 'Ashton and Elaine' by David Constantine (2013), and Malcolm Price's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being In Aberystwyth* (2005). Although true crime interrogates history, it is only once these crimes are re-presented in fiction that their recounting does not merely purport to offer the authority of realness, but rather, *writes back to* history. For instance, in many accounts of the Yorkshire Ripper case, a narrative that entirely centres around the killing of sex workers, sex workers themselves are absented and silenced from their own stories (as is unfortunately all too common). Likewise, the entire Ripper narrative, as it is generally told, never mentions the Miners' Strike(s). Yet despite their artificial separation, the one is the shadow narrative of the other: two sets of black and white images, two archives of violence and conflict. The police in one reality a beleaguered force, taunted by the Ripper and his hoaxing twin, at a loss, mocked in graffiti and football chants ('there's only one Yorkshire Ripper', and '11-0'), and in the other reality, a sea, an army, a wall of aggression, beating miners in the streets. David Peace's follow-up to the 'Red Riding' novels, *GB84*, which directly recounts the strike, is an exception – yet, even within the quartet itself, the strikes and their experience in ordinary human lives are unobtrusively threaded through the novels (e.g. the emergency torches kept by the next door neighbour of 'The Ratcatcher', a fictional murderer Dunford researches for The Yorkshire Evening Post).¹¹³

¹¹³ Indeed, in the 'Red Riding' books (and TV adaptations) Sutcliffe himself functions as the highly visible screen obscuring state-sanctioned abuse. Perhaps the body of writing about the Yorkshire Ripper is – in some ways – a more acceptable way of talking about the damage done to the North by Thatcherism, the trauma of the miners' strike and the collapse of industry. In addition to being an extremely traumatic set of events that put the North in lockdown and terrorised and killed women - and in so doing also provided a deeply paranoid and fearful backdrop for a variety of social upheavals – it might be argued that it also functions as an allegory or a screen memory for what Peace calls the 'social crime' of the miners' strike. This works in tandem with (is part of, is partly made available as a reading by) the foregrounding of North as post-industrial Gothic wasteland in such texts. Is it also a way of bringing forward the buried truth that inequality, lack of opportunity, and so on does in fact lead to increased crime and increased violence along established lines of power (e.g. of sexuality, class, race, gender etc.) in which sex workers and children so often at the bottom of the pile and therefore more likely to become victims.

The previous section discussed the theme of bodies as placeholders, screen memories for other things (the Northern body as emblem for reified and enduring bodies more generally; the murderer's body as fetishised echo of those of their victims). This is a vitally important aspect of the kinds of texts discussed in this section, which I shall refer to as true-crime fictions; the centrality of their engagement with, and strategic use of, such devices cannot be overstated. In its most obvious form this works at a plot level. For example, the Yorkshire Ripper functions as misdirection from the police-run corruption and paedophilia ring in *Red Riding*. In *Death Of A Murderer* and *Once In A House On Fire* the Moors Murders serve, in different ways, as placeholders for child abuse closer to home, within families, removed from the rarefied sphere of terror and exoticism of the serial killer. Likewise Frankie Mephisto, a composite catalogue of twentieth-century famous villainy (as I shall examine presently) acts as a red herring in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being in Aberystwyth* for more pervasive abuses by unknown, unsung, un-apprehended perpetrators.¹¹⁴

Death of a Murderer depicts a policeman's overnight vigil guarding Hindley's body following her death in 2002; he thinks about his friend Trevor's claim that he was abducted by Hindley and Brady as a child but escaped.¹¹⁵ As tiredness and paranoia kick in throughout the night he starts to see the ghost of Hindley, and longs to ask her whether she really tried to abuse his friend.¹¹⁶ For he has since come to suspect, in part because of the sheer strength of the Moors Murders narrative and the widespread cultural knowledge of its details, that his friend has suppressed his abuse by someone

¹¹⁴ I go on to discuss such red herrings in Chapter Two.

¹¹⁵ Hereafter referred to in-text as *Death* for brevity; Thomson pp.132-142.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.126.

'closer to home' and uses Hindley as a symbol to displace it: 'what he had heard had all the trappings of a story that was being told to cover another story, one that had to remain secret'.¹¹⁷ Using this explicitly placeholder-based idea, he unpicks it, talking of how Trevor tried to find an excuse for being so far away from home and severely upset, how his parents surmised that he was frightened because he was lost, leading them to weave an acceptable cover story to place over the incident and move on. Thus, Billy (the protagonist) surmises that there are in fact 'three stories' (one of being lost, one of Hindley abducting him, and one of the actual abuse that he had suffered and hidden from himself):

This third story had never been revealed, probably because it was too close to home. Perhaps it even involved members of his family. The advantage of the version he had told Billy [of being abducted by Hindley] was that it allowed him to unburden himself without actually giving anything away.¹¹⁸

Trevor's account of Hindley picking him up in her car emphasises her makeup and her hardness, her unsettling, excessive combination of glamour and grotesquerie, glitter and grit. The book uses an exceptionally large amount of visual media intertexts in its depictions of Hindley, referencing even photographs which were not widely circulated in the media. In contrast, Brady is literally invisible: in the scenes recounted by Trevor of his awful ordeal, Brady is a threatening frightening presence but always on the edge of sight, merely the sound of a motorbike, or a vague impression getting closer (on the bike as a rear-guard to Hindley's car, and then in the hall approaching the room she has Trevor in, threatening to cut off all escape, as Trevor barrels past in fear of his life). He, and thus the reader, is hemmed in from the edge to a centre that, visually and physically, is a close-up of Hindley. This theme of a story behind a story – and all the trauma and violence that never makes the news, never becomes part of history – is evident in the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.154.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp.153-5.

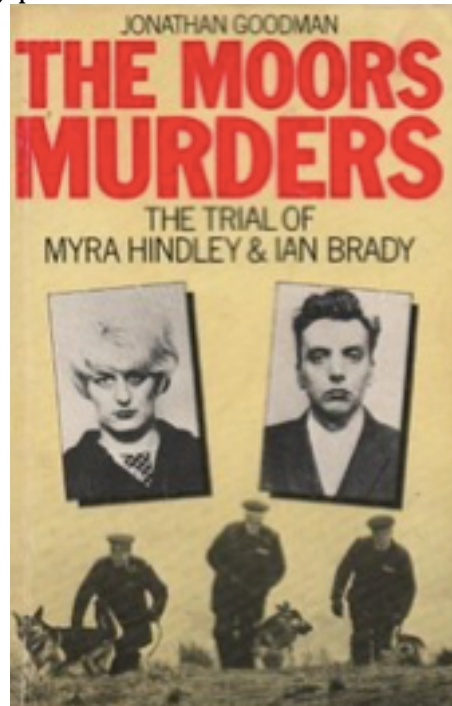
text's repeated reference to other kinds of crimes and other kinds of death: his friend Raymond's belief that his father and uncle's death by cancer was caused by the chemical company they worked for; Raymond and Billy's breaking in to an old couple's house out of boredom; Billy and Valentia's planning (and carrying out) her father's murder (although Billy never knows if it is this that killed him); Billy's imaginary killing of Sue's father; the ligature marks on Sue's father's girlfriend's wrists; the abused missing girl Billy tries to find; how Sue almost murdered their disabled daughter Emma.¹¹⁹ This highlights another central aspect of true crime fictions: their use of *echoes* and translated, altered, protean versions of the cases they represent, casting these reflections back on the normative society around the exceptionally-constructed celebrity crimes.

Such a translated echo of celebrity crime is enacted in the way in which *Once In A House On Fire* uses material intertexts of true crime artefacts and a retelling of the Moors Murders case to implicitly interrogate more normalised abuse 'close[r] to home' as *Death* puts it. An autobiographical novel by Andrea Ashworth set in 1970s Manchester focusing on the experiences of three sisters and their mother as they navigate poverty, abuse, trauma and mental ill-health, *Once's* referencing of the case occurs in a scene in which the protagonist and her sister are being babysat while their mother and stepfather are out, with the revelation upon their return that the stepfather has been engaging in sexual activity with the fifteen year old babysitter, at which he violently erupts in anger. At the start of the evening Tracy, the babysitter, is 'curled up in our stepfather's favourite chair, which [we] would never dream of going near, with [...] a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.56-58; p.61-64; p.204-05, p.207-14; p.46; p.101; p.89-91; p.82.

dog-earned paperback [... with a] stained cover.' The children are curious about her reading material and when she

nipped out for a smoke in the back yard [...] We inspected the book, splayed over the arm of our stepfather's chair. *The Moors Murders*. The words were red and dribbling, like blood, over two photos: a man and a woman, with hard mouths. You could tell they had done something evil. But the really spooky thing was the way the faces drew you in, making you peer at their lips and eyes: were they sorry or secretly pleased?¹²⁰



The siblings

begged Tracy when she came in from her smoke, to tell us the story inside the book. She rolled her eyes:
'Okay, but only after you've cleaned your teeth and got into bed. And you're never to tell your mam about it, right?'
'Right!' We scrubbed our teeth for the Moors Murders and climbed into our bunk beds. The story came out in nicotine and coffee whispers.

This passage relies on a juxtaposition of innocent domestic activities, like the anticipation of an exciting bedtime story, with the shadow-narrative of the final

¹²⁰ Andrea Ashworth, *Once in a House on Fire* (London: Picador, 1998), pp. 6-7. Hereafter referred to in-text as *Once*. Physical scrutiny of, and fascination for, the physical bodies and visibility of celebrity killers is again foregrounded. The described book cover and title correspond most closely to *The Moors Murders: The Trial of Myra Hindley and Ian Brady* by Jonathan Goodman. But this was not published until the second wave of Moors Murders true crime representation, in 1986. The author appears to have invented a fictional account of the Moors Murders, taking a text that existed by the time of writing and ascribing imaginary qualities to it. There is, as far as I can discover, no edition of any account of the case from the relevant time period that more accurately fits the description.

moments of those other children encountering the Moors Murderers in real life. The promise not to tell their mother has a chilling echo. The 'nicotine whispers' also reflects the case, a sensory evocation of the way Hindley must have smelled, the way she spoke to her victims (or to anyone). She was a famously heavy smoker (even for a time period when smoking was common and the health risks were not as widely known) who had a cigarette machine in her house – a detail that is repeatedly referenced in *Death*. Indeed, cigarettes and smoking are a major part of her characterisation in that novel: the end of her cigarette glowing in the dark as a stand-in for her ghost, the ash that vanishes from where she appears to have been, and her voice being that of a heavy smoker – a 'nicotine whisper' in fact.

The children's understanding of Tracy's version of the true-crime account is a jumbled and unsophisticated re-telling, in the shape of a fairy-tale or bedtime story, in which

The man and the woman kidnapped children just like Laurie and me. They took the children to a secret place on the Yorkshire Moors where they tortured them and touched them in the wrong places. They recorded the screams and sent the tapes to the children's mothers. Then they killed the children and buried them under the purple heather out on the moors where no one would ever find them.

The case is rendered Gothic in a way that elides it into the other kinds of narratives children are used to hearing, taking away some of its horror. This is akin to the way the Moors Murders are referenced in Sally Nichols's *An Island Of Our Own* (2015).¹²¹ Here an orphaned child explains her plan to find a relative's hidden treasures – thus saving herself and her siblings from destitution and being taken into care – to her older brother who has been looking after the younger children following their parent's deaths:

¹²¹ Hereafter, *Island* in text.

'It's like the Moors Murderers! I saw this TV programme about them – they killed loads of people and buried their bodies on the moors, and they took photos of the graves and went and had picnics on them. This is just the same!' I saw Jonathan's expression. 'Only, you know, gold and stuff, not bodies. Probably. Although maybe bodies actually, knowing Uncle Evan.' [...] 'Maybe,' he said, in the end. 'But [...] these are just pictures of beaches and railway lines. How are you going to find out where they are? There are still bodies of people the Moors Murderers killed that the police haven't found. And their photos are of one moor! These could be anywhere!'¹²²

Like *Once*, this reference relies on a media intertext which itself a priori relies on a forensic intertext: the documentary about the case, and the photos taken by Brady which function as a dark version of a treasure map to graves. There is, as with Ashworth's novel, an implicit shadow narrative invoked; the Moors Murders being a referent to discuss a plan to enable these children to avoid getting taken into care. The treasure is an avoidance of something worse than just being apart from one another. It brings with it the haunting trace of the many cases of abuse in children's homes throughout the country, and indeed the world. The text offers a split between two alternative futures for its child protagonists: treasure and safety, or poverty and abuse; a map to gold or a map to your grave or that of those like you.¹²³

In addition to her smoking, the novel creates other correspondences between Tracy and Hindley: Hindley famously having been a babysitter prior to her crimes (an unremarkable fact made noteworthy only by retrospective interrogation of an assumed lack of 'natural' mothering instincts). Her brusque manner and way of speaking coupled with her impatience and apparent selfishness are echoes of Hindley, of versions of Hindley that we have come to recognise from true crime and true-crime-influenced texts. Likewise Tracy is linked to Hindley through allusions to heavy makeup, affairs,

¹²² Sally Nichols, *An Island Of Our Own* (Scholastic Fiction, Amazon Kindle Ebook, 2015).

¹²³ Nowhere is the use of the implicit but unexpressed shadow narrative more strongly and yet more originally used than in David Constantine's 2013 short story, 'Ashton and Elaine', as I shall discuss shortly.

and Tracy's ambiguous place as victim and supposed transgressor, taking the blame in a situation where an older more powerful man was clearly at fault: 'Tracy's mother was livid because [our stepfather] had spoiled her daughter. But Tracy insisted she loved my stepfather. The affair was dropped, and our new babysitter came with thick glasses and horrid skin.'¹²⁴ Tracy's class and gender signifiers seem to position her in a similar role, her lack of respectability seemingly in keeping with her unsympathetic portrayal, like that of Hindley; her lack of appropriate femininity implying her fate is earned. Yet in having been induced into a sexual relationship to which she cannot meaningfully consent, her experience also pre-echoes the abuse that the protagonist and her sisters go on to suffer in the novel, making Tracy representative of both Hindley and also her victims. Thus, the apparently diverse palette of femininities displayed in this extract, as well as their varying levels of 'respectability' and thus blame, are revealed to be an illusion; safety is not earned or won by looking or behaving a certain way, and the variety apparently differentiating the femininities on display is actually elided by the fact that all of these women are ultimately reduced to their use value for the text's men. The flimsiness of the claim to the contrary seems implicit in the discord between the words and their meaning: the child takes the replacement of their babysitter phlegmatically, at face value, while the adult narrator of the story (in the now of the text) would deplore the suggestion that warding off male assault was predicated on dress, or the responsibility of the victim, or indeed that glasses and skin problems ever either ruled someone out for conducting consensual sexual activity, or, even less, ever saved anyone from abuse. The use of the phrase 'came with', suggests a babysitter's physical appearance is part of a package, as they are commodities to be bought. It also suggests that, in choosing a babysitter, the woman of the house (and thus care-provider)

¹²⁴ Ashworth, p.8.

must be careful not to buy one that could tempt her man, who, such a logic implies, is not responsible for his own behaviour. There's an anonymous replicability suggested here that foregrounds the expectation of undervalued female labour, from babysitting to mothering to sex work. It is as if babysitters were interchangeable and whatever you do to them has no weight or meaning: it lasts only until you buy another. The language of overlooked female labour is also apparent in the double meaning of 'clear it up' – the children's mother is sorting out her husband's mess in multiple ways; she manages the situation by discussing it with Tracy's mother and containing its implications. The use of the word 'spoiled' in this context recalls the other sense of the word: over-indulgence of children, pampering them more than is thought to be good for them, rather than, as here, a statutory rape of a fifteen-year-old child. Even in the property-like terminology of patriarchal parenthood, 'ruined' would be a more usual term. However, using 'spoiled' may prompt the word 'child' in the reader's mind, in what seems a natural pairing, foregrounding that while Tracy is left in charge of younger children, she is herself a child. The passage thus has a number of operative double meanings, and a visceral use of subtle screen memories for more violent or invasive acts: the cup of coffee thrown at a wall, when so intimately associated with Tracy, seems an act of proxy violence against her as well as a frightening act of dominance over the woman and children in the house, while the phrase 'splayed over the arm of our stepfather's chair' is knowingly and obliquely suggestive, standing in for sexual acts by adults against children, in the way I have discussed in relation to *Beyond Belief*.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ This scene is of a pair with the pollutant mingling of tea and blood in Dave Smith's description of being forced to help clean the crime scene in *See No Evil*: 'have a cup of tea, [...] They made me clean up. I had to kneel in the blood'. The prosaic everydayness of violence's intrusion into domestic spaces – elided and overlaid with exceptionalised murder – makes itself felt in *Once*, combining the two once more in the emblematic presence of the Moors Murders haunting this scene of commonplace apparently minor domestic and sexual violence.

The references to the Moors Murders in the novels I discuss in this section are, therefore, emblematic of a broader set of ills, in this instance symbolically prefiguring the plot of abusive fathers and stepfathers' sexual contact with teenage girls. Rather than covering the reality of the connection by drawing an ontological dichotomy between the two sets of abuses, it implicitly places them on a continuum with one another – murder being an excess, or outgrowth of the domestic sexual crimes committed here. Thus, true crime posits (even if unconsciously) the quotidian as violent and violence as quotidian. The book about the Moors Murderers, which Tracy reads, is thus an object and symbol silently judging the situation in which it is a prop.

The scene also relates to my argument about fears surrounding true crime's illicit contents and uses *within true-crime accounts themselves* – but also, connectedly, about cultural uses of crime as a stand-in for sex. Ellie Slee argues that, from the 1930s to the 1960s in American film, rape scenes were used to *stand in for* sex scenes in order to avoid censorship under the Hays Code.¹²⁶ The navigation of this issue in written form prefigures a problem that I shall discuss in Chapter Two below: how to represent abusers, visually and tonally. This tension results in representations that contain simultaneous clashing meanings and affects, situating the abuser at a juncture between revulsion and the odd allure that crime texts often grant the rape-cultural villain. As I discuss in the next chapter, the fetishisation of such villains is a side effect of the conditions of representation, in that the abuse they commit cannot be directly shown, and thus a form of displaced proxy-objectification takes place. *Death* inverts this, using this set of attraction-inflected tropes to convey not titillation but trauma.

¹²⁶ Ellie Slee, 'Femininity and Costume in 1930s Horror', *Film, Fashion & Consumption* (3:1, 2014, pp.31-45), p.38.

The scenes in this novel in which abuse is partially described (Trevor's account of his abduction by Hindley; Venetia's of her abuse by her father) – again, with the lacunae of taking the reader up to the edge of violence but then fading to black on the acts themselves – nevertheless unsettling the glamour of famous killers and of adored abusers. Venetia's father's abuse is described in terms of glamour, even romance, that falters into a 'secret side of him', turning the language of a romance novel into something starkly chilling:

He started calling me V. V, darling. V, my sweet. He would pick me up after school and we would go to the cinema, or if it was summer we would drive out into the country. He had a beautiful car. A Daimler [...] – all soft leather and polished wood. It was [part of ...] the secret glamorous side of him – the part of him I'd never been allowed to see. [...]

but then I noticed there was something in his eyes that I couldn't remember seeing before, something strange and glittery, and his breathing was noisier than usual. I could hear each breath, and when he spoke, his voice was husky.¹²⁷

This juxtaposition and interweaving of the two elements disturbs any passive entertainment or enjoyment, confronting the trope with the return of its trauma and using the jarring-ness of the two things together – glamorous romance and child abuse – to capture something of the queasy, ontologically disruptive horror of trauma itself.

Gothic Geographies, Occult Histories

Malcolm Pryce's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being In Aberystwyth* (2005) is part of a series of novels conducting postmodern comedy pastiches of the noir and hard-boiled detective genres, set in a distorted version of the Welsh city of Aberystwyth, following the adventures of private eye Louis Knight. This instalment has a subplot that is discursively linked to the disappearance of Keith Bennett (in the Moors Murders case) and the subsequent inability to find his body (only his shoe). It also echoes the postal

¹²⁷ Thompson, pp. 201-2.

and media interactions between Hindley and Brady and between Hindley and the parents of their victims, and the expectation that Brady could lead people to the final unfound body, if he wanted to:

The letters from Frankie were always the same. He said he had been visited by the Holy Ghost. That he had changed. And he asked for Mrs Prestatyn's blessing. [...] It was never proved that Frankie's mob killed Mrs Prestatyn's girl [...] We never found a body or anything. Just the shoe. [...] If Frankie would just tell [her] where her girl is buried her soul could find peace.¹²⁸

The narrative refers to the haunting uncertainty surrounding the location of the missing body – but by signalling the affinity with Bennett's fate, the detail takes on the significance of a tangible clue, and also foregrounds the centrality of public common knowledge and social memory to the mythologising of such cases: 'they found the missing girl's shoe. It didn't prove anything [...] but the coincidence was too great for most folk'.¹²⁹ The novel fuses the 'geezer' of the Great Train robbery and Frankie Fraser with Ian Brady into one figure (and in naming him Frankie Mephisto also gestures towards Mephistopheles from Faust).¹³⁰

As in *Somebody's Husband*, 'Red Riding', and the Moors Murders myth as a whole, there is a sense that there is an innate, deeply-buried, continually radiating taint within the land itself. Mephisto sends a biography of Pope Gregory to the 'waifs home' manager, to indicate that he knows her (and the home's) secret. This contains a passage describing the draining of a nunnery's fishpond, revealing 'six thousand infant skulls', and lists numerous similar discoveries. The account regards it as a matter of course that the

¹²⁸ Malcolm Pryce, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being in Aberystwyth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 74 - 5. Hereafter *Unbearable* in-text for brevity.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹³⁰ This raises an interesting point about how criminals are remembered: who becomes a monster and who a national treasure. 'Mad' Frankie Fraser was an English gangster who spent 42 years in prison for violent offences, yet in later life became a celebrity personality, appearing on numerous television shows, including the comedy panel game *Shooting Stars*, had several documentaries made of his life, appeared in a theatrical one-man show, *An Evening with Mad Frankie Fraser* (Patrick Newley, 1999), and had an acting role in the early 'British gangster' genre film *Hard Men* (J. K. Amalou, 1996). For more on the similar career arc of other British gangsters, see Chapter Three.

murder of unwanted children will recur 'wherever you get a lot of healthy young women living together'. Such features of the landscape – and the resultant sink-holes of condensed, layered suffering from other times – are treated as a regrettable necessity: the biography describes how, when they founded the convent,

After the chapter and the kitchen, the ornamental fish pond was the first thing they built. The skulls have been there a long time. It's just that they keep turning up from time to time. The earth moves a lot next to an estuary apparently.¹³¹

The reference to the earth moving echoes the explanation, discussed in the press and true crime, that the reason Brady cannot lead us to Bennett's grave is the soil has shifted beneath the surface.¹³² *Death* also discusses this:

if he dug here, something might come to light – a pair of spectacles, a shoe . . . he stood back. What was he thinking? The moor had been searched [...] Besides, the top layer had shifted over the years; areas of peat that had been exposed in the sixties would now be thoroughly grassed over.¹³³

Longstanding public opinions(s) around the missing remains and Brady's attitude to them are vital to the plot of *Unbearable*; without the apparent self-evidence of this set of tropes – the dead child and the selfish conniving serial killer keeping his secret to torment those left behind – the revelation that, rather than having been murdered by Frankie, the girl was alive and had been subjected to appalling abuses and confinement not far from her own home would have lost much of its impact. It would have been a horrible plot element, but not a twist, if we had been led to consider other explanations of her disappearance than that which, in the light of Brady's case, seems the most obvious narrative arc.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Pryce, p.202.

¹³² In sending her this, the novel creates the logic that not only does this Brady *apparently* know where his own bodies are hidden, he's also presumed to know where other people's are too.

¹³³ Thomson, p.28.

¹³⁴ Also, in a reference to left luggage (the protagonist gives it as a false name) and Frankie Mephisto's copy of the biography of Pope Gregory (as, it becomes clear later, containing a clue or a message regarding the case) there is a referential echo with the left luggage slip for Hindley and Brady's recording, photographs and books, hidden in a prayer book. (p. 139).

Unbearable's ornamental fishpond from which skulls are recovered echoes 'Red Riding''s refrain of decorative covers hiding something appalling: 'tell them about the others [...] under those beautiful new carpets. [...] Under the grass that grows between the cracks and the stones'.¹³⁵ A local policeman has a small cache of babies' skulls that have been found in the area,

He pulled open the drawer in the desk [...] and] took out a small skull [...] then two more and set them beside it.
'They're human. Infants. All less than a month or two old. [...] We've got a collection, been handed in over the years. The story [...] is much older than that. Seven hundred years older.'¹³⁶

The emergence of the skulls not only mimics the literal physical return of evidential artefacts (and trauma-processing experience of many survivors) in such cases; it also physically symbolises the public and media revelation of a staggering number of real-life child abuse cases emerging since the 1980s in America and Britain, most closely echoing a number of high profile cases involving care homes, religious organisations and unearthed burial grounds.¹³⁷ The volume of real-life cases from which *Unbearable* draws

¹³⁵ David Peace, *Nineteen Seventy Four* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999). This phrase is first said by the medium Mrs Wymer (p.126), and then Mrs Dawson (p.229), and remembered by Dunford on p.275, and twice on p.276.

¹³⁶ Pryce, p.201.

¹³⁷ The landmark case of the Kincora Boys' Home in Belfast, first reported in the *Irish Independent* ('Fitt to raise 'cover up' in Westminster - Sex Racket at Children's Home') on the 24th of January 1980, and the North Wales care home abuse scandal, especially of relevance due to its geographic closeness to the setting of *Unbearable*. Both cases started the paedophile panic in Britain that emerged in the 1980s and became extremely culturally central in the 1990s, forming the cultural context for Pryce's work. The latter case was the subject of 10 public enquiries between 1990 and 1996, re-entering the public gaze in 2000, five years before *Unbearable* was published, with the Waterhouse report. (It returned again in 2012 when new allegations caused Prime Minister David Cameron to institute an independent inquiry into the conduct and remit of the original Waterhouse Inquiry, and Home Secretary Theresa May to announce a police inquiry into the original police investigation.) See also the 'satanic ritual abuse' moral panic, sparked by *Michelle Remembers*, a since-discredited book, published in America in 1980, by psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith, his patient (and later wife) about the allegedly recovered memories of suffering Satanic abuse she accessed through therapy with him. The panic, further fuelled by the contemporaneous McMartin day-care sexual abuse trial, spread through the United States in the 1980s and to Britain and around the world by the late 1990s. It also set off the related but differently-inflected 1990s 'phantom social worker' panic in both countries, intensified by the 1987 Cleveland child abuse claims scandal, in which 121 allegedly false reports of child sexual abuse were filed by Middlesbrough hospital paediatricians Drs Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt. These reports were based on controversial diagnostic practices, resulting in a number of potentially unwarranted referrals to social services; 94 children were returned to their families after the Butler-Sloss report investigated the drastic uptake in

its intertextual and cultural context is profoundly vast, and global in scope, with the Catholic Church's paedophile priests scandal, unfolding over several decades and unresolved even today, forming a macrocosmic backdrop. A more closely-focussed and immediately reproduced referent is the longstanding unacknowledged public awareness of the forced labour and abuse women and girls were subjected to at Irish Catholic Church-run 'Magdalene Laundries' until the 1980s.¹³⁸ Similarly, the text's themes relating to the draining of nunnery fish ponds and the emergence of babies' bones from the soil relies on real-life unacknowledged awareness and unofficial histories of the systemic murder of children from Irish church-run homes for unmarried mothers, physical evidence for which was unearthed in 2014 (after many decades of claims) when over 700 children's' bodies were disinterred at unmarked sites at a home run by Catholic nuns in Tuam.¹³⁹ The novel's material and psychic foundation, much like the land it describes, is packed solid with the evidence and consequences of real-life 'historical abuse'.¹⁴⁰

apparent abuse.'20 years on from the Cleveland Child Sex Abuse Scandal', *Middlesbrough Gazette*, 8th of July 2008.

¹³⁸ The Irish state was also forced to apologise in 2013 for inhumane treatment and 'slave labour' inflicted on over 10,000 women and girls at Church-run 'Magdalene Laundries' in which unmarried mothers and girls with troubled home lives were removed from their families and used as a source of free labour until the 1980s. Henry McDonald, 'Ireland apologises for 'slave labour' at Magdalene Laundries', *The Guardian*, 19th February 2013. Pryce's novel makes a joking referencing directly to such treatment, in Seren's unfounded and quickly retracted complaints about being starved and subjected to cruel treatment (pp.96-7; p.126).

¹³⁹ 'Claim of 800 children's remains buried at Irish home for unwed mothers', *The Guardian*, 4th of June 2014.

¹⁴⁰ A term meaning non-recent abuse or any form of child abuse reported once the survivor is over the age of eighteen that is used in the press primarily to refer to cases in which a large amount of time has elapsed between the alleged abuse and its reporting. The emblematic discovery of the skulls also resonates chillingly with the children's remains found at Gordonstoun, an elite boarding school in Scotland formerly attended by Prince Charles in an underground burial ground 'filled with children's teeth' from ritual beheadings conducted by Pictish clans in the bronze age. 'Cave filled with children's teeth found at Prince Charles' boarding school', *The Daily Mirror*, 15th of September 2015; This archaeological find is made more disturbing by allegations of widespread physical and child sexual abuse at that same school emerging in April of the same year. Alex Renton, 'Rape, child abuse and Prince Charles's former school', *The Guardian*, 12th of April 2015. The intertwining of different time periods' historical abuses reiterating the novel's refrain that the past cannot stay buried and that long-distant events both were real sources of trauma and pain and also continue to create those in the present and the future.

Connecting the finds with the biography of Pope Gregory creates an explicitly textual sense that history, and the landscape itself, is haunted. It suggests, furthermore, that history is a cover-up: the history of things and lands *is* the history of cover ups abuse and hauntings. This theme, and its geographical element in particular, is also made metaphorically present in the figuratively haunted landscape. For example, in a cavern near to the discoveries, the protagonist hears gusts of air: ‘Sounds like it’s breathing, doesn’t it? [...] Sounds like the whole place is alive and breathing’,¹⁴¹ and he ‘wondered whether it was the sound of my soul inhaling and I myself had died.’¹⁴² While that haunting there is figurative, the novel also stages literal hauntings in the subplot of a local, supposedly-solved Victorian rape and murder that is not as straightforward as it seems – and whose location is allegedly stalked by a literal ghost.¹⁴³ Not only can ‘solved’ crimes not be neatly confined to the past, but they can ‘get out’ and influence the present and the future. This is made literal in *Death*, in which Hindley’s ghost’s dialogue with Billy forces his own past to return and impinge on his present.

The sense that nothing can be confined to the past is a strong element:

“Pope Gregory and the skulls. It’s ancient history, nothing to do with her nor anybody else. All forgotten long ago.”
 [...] “Is that what she told you? [...] Said she was ashamed of all those old skulls left in the pond? [...] Oh no it wasn’t ancient history she was afraid of”.¹⁴⁴

Yet, earlier the novel posits, “‘It’s ancient history, why should anybody care?’” “There’s no such thing as ancient history.”¹⁴⁵ The speaker responds by telling Louie Knight to ‘Just call [his (female, teenage) investigative partner] off or she could get hurt’ from her

¹⁴¹ Pryce, p.201.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ The investigators also use hypnosis, past life regression and Ouija as part of their detective arsenal, questioning the dead and also their own past selves.

¹⁴⁴ Pryce, p.246.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.122.

inquiries, suggesting that not only is history not closed off from the present, but also that its repercussions continue to be forcefully felt. Indeed, merely the process of examining the past can not only unearth newly discovered past pain, but also create new pain in the present and the future.

Unbearable's (coded, non-explicit) references to the Moors Murders (as well as many other crimes), and the late-twentieth-century surge in discoveries of historical child abuse cases, enable it to stage a reinterpretation of reality – an alternative, shadow history. Yet this 'shadow' need not always be threatening or troublingly destabilising. Such narrative ghosting is relevant to Helen Pleasance's important and innovative point about David Constantine's 2013 short story, 'Ashton and Elaine'. Pleasance posits that this story remixes the 'Moors Murders' case, shuffling its narrative nodes into a different constellation, which says very different things about the working-class community in which both narratives are set. Having described how it

opens with a scene on Ashton Market as a boy is found hiding under a tarpaulin behind a market stall by the son of the stall holder, in the twilight of an early winter evening in 1962

Pleasance argues that, for a reader versed in the facts of the case,

this immediately sets off a haunting association - John Kilbride. the second of Brady and Hindley's victims was, not found, but lost from Ashton Market, abducted on just such an evening in November 1963.

This scene is also in dialogue with Duncan Staff's *The Lost Boy* (2007), and, more broadly, the general cultural knowledge of Keith Bennett as irrevocably more lost, more of a loss, a locus of cultural trauma, because his remains were never found. As Pleasance implies, the character Ashton's entire identity is predicated on his being *found*: 'the foundling boy [...] is named Ashton, after the place where he was found'. Constantine thus presents an alternate reality in which that loss – and that of all children who 'slip

through the cracks' into abuse, who get 'lost in the system', who are personally or systemically harmed by adults – need never have happened. Ashton lives first in the children's home and is then fostered by a local family, a set of occurrences that in the context of the case suggests far more negative associations, as well as, say, Brady's own experiences of being fostered and of Borstal. But these echoes are ruses: there is no traumatic unveiling. Instead, it is a radically restorative refiguring of the narrative.

Yet the brooding presence of the cruelty of human history remains, a presence that is imagined in the form of landscape, that

will lie in your dreams and in the imagination high and level ever after, as a foreign zone, as a different dimension of the life of the earth [where] You are very close to a zone and a form of life in the world which under the human traffic and the human litter goes down and down many thousands of feet, unimaginably dark, unimaginably old, and with not the least memory or presentiment of love or pity.¹⁴⁶

As Pleasance argues, when 'Ashton is taken to live in a children's home on the moors [...] the moors are evoked as a gothic, liminal space'.¹⁴⁷ The moor becomes a symbol of the unconscious, made physically literal, like the sea: protean, shifting, monolithic. This is another example of the true crime trope in which objects in a serial killer's house *are* their subconscious, their subjectivity, their consciousness, *themselves*. Here landscape – physicality, materiality – represents, is a metaphor for, *is*, the self. The moor becomes the buried shadow narrative, the unconscious of the story.¹⁴⁸ In Constantine's story, history serves as the repressed unconscious of fiction, which may remind us of Fredric

¹⁴⁶ David Constantine, 'Ashton and Elaine', *Red Room: New Short Stories Inspired by the Brontës* (Milton Keynes, Unthank, 2013), p.79.

¹⁴⁷ Helen Pleasance, 'Refusing the Gothic Return: History, Fiction and the Moors Murders, Or, What it means to know too much about Myra Hindley', *True Crime Fictions* Conference, The Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, 01 July 2016.

¹⁴⁸ I discuss how this 'landscape as historical unconscious of the text' technique works in the credits of screen artefacts in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Jameson's argument that literary creation cannot be divorced from its socio-political context.¹⁴⁹

Time and place are the most important elements for the text's haunting returns.

Pleasance argues,

The story unfolds over the summer of 1963, [... creating a] haunting association [...] with the abduction of Pauline Reade and her burial on the moors in July 1963; [...] invoke[ing] the very day of her abduction, 'the Sunday nearest to 12 July' [is when] Ashton and his new family go for a picnic, and the 'rocky knoll' to which the children climb hauntingly suggests Hollin Brow Knoll, the place from where Pauline Reade's body was exhumed in 1987. Ashton's foster father waves back to the children on the knoll as he digs peat for fuel - the man digging, a further haunting invocation, of the burial of bodies on the moor. As 12 July 1963 was a Friday, Constantine is placing this happy family scene and the image of the innocent digging man on the moor two days after Brady and Hindley murdered and buried Pauline Reade there.

Not only did Ian Brady also dig up peat from the moor, as Pleasance indicates, with an aim of 'disguise[ing] a darker [...] enterprise', but also the digging figure is a foster father who acts like a real father should, rather than Brady's horrifying pantomime of fatherhood in his abuse of Lesley Ann Downey, whom he later buried.¹⁵⁰ The (dis)location in time of these two versions of the same and similar actions creates a multiple overlay of images: a bright shadow narrative to the more famous 'darker' one. And this reflects back, upon the Northern communities and identities that are framed by, and constitute the imagined frame for, the Moors Murders myth. As Pleasance argues,

Constantine draws attention to the light, not the dark in the duality of Gothic references [.. e.g. his] description of the summer picnic). [...] with his coded references to the [...] murders he is saying, don't look at the dark happenings of these times (specifically 12 July and 23 November 1963), look at the good, look at the happy family picnicking on the moors, who have invited a stranger into their midst, with happy consequences. He specifically places this in a longer history of the industrial north. The children's home where Ashton is first placed is an old mill owner's house, and is a 'warm and safe' place, which has escaped its

¹⁴⁹ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (originally London: Methuen, 1981, this edition Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.58.

¹⁵⁰ See the following section of this chapter for more on this.

foundation on 19th-century child labour. The character of Ashton is also significant in this. For most of the story he is mute because unspeakable things have happened to him in his past. But he overcomes this past. Constantine's message seems to be that dark histories can be overcome. Thus, a brooding silence of historical trauma, in the case of both Ashton and the landscape, become written over with future possibilities for speech and for change and renewal, explicitly 'refus[ing ...] the Moors murders as an interpretive device for Northern working-class history'.¹⁵¹ As with *Unbearable*, 'the associations are just that, haunting, uncanny references which might or might not be directly invoking the Moors murders'.¹⁵²

Yet both narratives have a hinge of incontestable reality – physical detail – that opens up their connection to the crimes. In the former novel it is the solitary shoe, and, as Pleasance demonstrates, the latter story

leaves [...] no doubt [, taking] us back to Ashton Market [...] on 23 November 1963, the day that John Kilbride was abducted from there and murdered by Brady and Hindley. The reference is too direct to be anything but intentional.

This return to the place of both the tale's finding and the real-life crime's losing sees Ashton's foster family return to the 'stall where Ashton was found a year earlier'. The stallholder jokes with customers, 'referring to them by the names of contemporary celebrities [... including a] "darkly bouffant Alma Cogan".' As Pleasance contends, this not only 'references [...] directly' the Gordon Burn novel of the same name, but also Hindley's practise of wearing a black wig 'as disguise when she abducted children'; thus, this customer acts as a stand-in for – is readable as – Hindley herself. I would add that this is especially clear because of the strongly-established link in public consciousness between Hindley and the bouffant hairdo. In these two details her status as an abductor, abuser and murderer is foregrounded: not only readable as Hindley herself but Hindley

¹⁵¹ Pleasance, 2016.

¹⁵² Ibid.

in abduction mode. The wig was intimately connected with her luring children into her car (as is directly dramatised in *Death*),¹⁵³ and, as I shall discuss in the next section, the dénouement of *Alma Cogan* is a transcript of the result – and purpose – of one such abduction: Hindley and Brady torturing Lesley Ann Downey to death.

In contrast to Constantine's coded references constituting what Pleasance calls 'a considered and intentional refusal of a Gothic return', Pryce re-Gothicises the case, turning it into something more akin to an end-of-the-pier entertainment or a waxwork – the dramatic finale of the novel is that neither Myfanwy *nor* 'Mrs Prestatyn's daughter' were dead. Composite villain Mephisto 'play[s] his Trump card. That one no one even suspected he had. "What makes you think she's dead? [...] There are fates worse than death you know".'¹⁵⁴ In parallel narratives both women are not only condemned by men to an abusive life-in-death and death-in-life (in opposite ways), but also, textually, both only serve as passive motivations for the actions of male protagonists and antagonists. Mephisto is described as *playing* in revealing this information, while, in the worst of both possible outcomes, her survival is only discovered in the recovery of her recently, and horrifically, deceased body.¹⁵⁵ I suggest that this indicates a relationship with the established mythology of Brady as able to reveal the whereabouts of Keith Bennett's remains but refusing to do so. Both missing women are subject to the most brutal and literal objectification by the text, a violence that feels shockingly out of place in an apparently light-entertainment novel. Rather than overlaying the dark real-life story with a light alternative set of possibilities, as Constantine does, Pryce takes a dark real-

¹⁵³ Thomson, p. 139; p.155; p.245.

¹⁵⁴ Pryce, pp.247-8.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 253-4.

life story, places it in a light-hearted narrative, and yet, despite the comedy-cynicism and humorously excessive genre trappings, renders it shockingly dark all over again.

David Peace's 'Red Riding Quartet', consisting of *Nineteen Seventy Four* (1999), *Nineteen Seventy Seven* (2000), *Nineteen Eighty* (2001), and *Nineteen Eighty Three* (2002), has been described as 'Yorkshire Noir' by reviewers.¹⁵⁶ It depicts police corruption, exploitation and competing masculinities playing out against a backdrop of serial murder in a specifically mid-late 20th century Yorkshire milieu. Peace's books have a self-described 'occult' style of depicting 'social crime'. In interview with Mark Lawson, Peace clarified his use of occult as meaning 'hidden or occluded more than the realm of the supernatural [... i.e.] unknown or obscured elements of British political history'.¹⁵⁷ However, as Hart highlights, Peace's writing also features literal forms of the occult, invoking the supernatural, a paranoid atmosphere, and conspiracy theory alongside more straightforwardly traditional techniques of historical fiction.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, I argue, Peace enacts a political 'existential struggle' that is not only Marxist, as Hart claims, but also expands into a tacit analysis of rape culture. Thus, Peace is theorising (or explicitly acknowledging) the same ideas about history and place as haunted that I have examined thus far. However, as Hart suggests this account of Peace's meaning is at best only half true. Occult is not just hidden knowledge; rather, Peace knows and makes use of the term's 'connotations of haunting and ritual violence' to explicitly suggest that 'the

¹⁵⁶ For example, Gerard Gilbert, 'Red Riding: Yorkshire noir on TV: Channel 4's trilogy of films based on David Peace's 'Yorkshire noir' novels, will shock even seasoned viewers of crime drama', *The Independent*, 4 March 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew Hart, 'The Third English Civil War: David Peace's "Occult History" of Thatcherism', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 49, No. 4, *Contemporary Literature and the State* (Winter, 2008), pp. 573-596. (p.577).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

political history of Britain [...] is subterranean in more than one sense, a matter of bodies that will not stay buried as well as stories that have not been told'.¹⁵⁹

Gothic and occult, as theorised by Peace, both involve a return of the repressed.

Indeed, there are two kinds of return in this chapter. The first is 'The Gothic Return' as posited by Pleasance, which constitutes a compulsion to repeatedly re-render Hindley as a monster – and working-class Northern history as emblematised by (the most Gothic reading of) the Moors case – despite textual digressions away from such a representational tradition. The second is a return of the repressed social crime – the repressed of trauma, of normalised violence – which sits at a precise and delicate hinge between parts of Schmid's theorising of true-crime narratives: in between his discussion of the refutation of the social in serial killer representations and his point about the justification of everyday violence by the creation of the celebrity serial killer. These processes, as Schmid describes them, clearly work in tandem or in mutual service; the one contributes to and facilitates the other. But this is only the case in true crime; in true-crime *fictions* the process of the former actually undermines and unpicks the latter, taking the tools of true crime's conventional common sense and using it against the genre. This chapter has already discussed elements of how this plays out in true crime (in the nonfictional works *Portrait* and *Beyond Belief*). But here, these writers are deliberately using their fictions to flag up how a Gothic mentality accrues to these crimes in cultural memory - indeed, this is a key difference between true-crime *fictions* and 'true crime'.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.,p.578.

In a 2014 keynote speech ‘The Moors Murders and the “Truth” of True Crime’, Schmid examined the construction of the Moors Murders as Gothic.¹⁶⁰ He analysed this in relation to Robert Wilson’s *Devil’s Disciples* (1986). Wilson’s true-crime account opens with an aerial view (in a manner typical of that which I described earlier in this chapter) of a spooky haunted moorland of childhood bogeyman tales:

High above the twinkling lights of a city crouches Saddleworth Moor, gaunt, hooded with mist, silent. And the keeper of dreadful secrets. In the valley below [...] chilling stories are told. The older people repeat tales handed down from their grandparents – accounts of unsolved murders and of the days when fearful hill farmers carried charms in their pockets to protect them from evil spirits. Many of the stories are about children [...] children being snatched from cradles by “little people”... children vanishing and suspicions of their being buried... Of the witches, the boggarts, the child-snatchers, the murderers [...] But of all the stories of Saddleworth Moor, none is so incredible, haunting, evil, as that first told a generation ago. [...] And more than two decades later the soft peat of the still-secretive moor – and the lives of dozens of people living among those twinkling city lights – still bears the scars of what became known as the Moors Murders.¹⁶¹

This passage is very similar to (but even more exaggeratedly Gothic than) Williams’s opening of *Beyond Belief*, in which:

An empty mountain landscape, even in the sun, evokes wonder in me but not affection; by night, even bathed in moonlight it chills my heart. I remember what my cousins told me, that up here live the Bogey-men, shadowy giants with staring eyes who lurch silently up and down the roadsides. The wind whimpers through the stone walls, then from the dark beyond I hear ghostly rustlings that press the fingernails into the palm. And I hurry down to the horizon, to the reassuring glow of the suburbs.¹⁶²

Schmid’s point is that true crime is (already) Gothic and self-consciously fictive as well as ‘factual’: rather than being a paradox or ‘a flat contradiction’, this indicates that ‘we are dealing with two kinds of truth in true crime’. This double truth points both to true crime’s multiply-layered relation with time, but also provides an excellent example of my theorisation of the genre’s construction of space. In the subgenre of true crime (and

¹⁶⁰ David Schmid, ‘The Moors Murders and the “Truth” of True Crime’, *True Crime: Fact, Fiction, Ideology* Conference, Manchester Conference Centre, June the 6th, 2014. See also Schmid, 2005, pp.6-7 for more on uses of Gothic in true crime ‘as archetypes of unalterable evil’.

¹⁶¹ Robert Wilson, *Devil’s Disciples* (London: Javelin, 1986), p.5.

¹⁶² Williams, p.15.

true-crime related) representations of the cases this thesis examines, the self-consciously fictive Gothic in play is a *specifically* Northern Gothic, one that is explicitly connected with place and landscape, and consciously engages with – refuting and reusing – Stephen Kohl’s theory of the imagined North as a ‘fallen’ South.¹⁶³ Tony Grisoni, screenwriter of the ‘Red Riding’ TV film adaptations, highlights this tendency, quoting a line from the third film:

We are a nation at war. Everything run-down, closed, obsolete. A wounded land without heroes where bad men do bad things and get away with it. An age of darkness and witch trials.¹⁶⁴

He suggests that it stands as a summation of Peace’s (and the series’s) themes and Gothic vision of the continuing effects of corruption, exploitation and abuse. The idea of a ‘wounded land’ suggests that the landscape is yet another physical form that holds and carries the echoes of bodily (and emotional and social) trauma – like Mark Seltzer’s concept of ‘wound culture’: ‘Murder [...] is where bodies and history cross’.¹⁶⁵

Stuart Maconie’s 2007 travelogue/memoir, *Pies and Prejudice* stages a similar Northern Gothic intrusion into popular temporal narrative precisely through situating its account in space and time:

Nineteen sixty-six was not just the year of Moore, Charlton, Hurst and triumph in north London. It was also the year of Brady and Hindley and wickedness beyond belief in Manchester.

¹⁶³ Stephen Kohl, ‘The “North” of “England”: A Paradox?’, *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England* (2007), pp.93-116, p.93. For more on the Northern Gothic, see Het Phillips, ‘“A Woman Like That Is Not A Woman, Quite. I Have Been Her Kind”: Maxine Peake and the Gothic Excess of Northern Femininity’, in the forthcoming *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain*, ed. David Forrest and Beth Johnson (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁶⁴ Tony Grisoni, ‘Writing Red Riding’, [online] *Vertigo Magazine* (2009).
[https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/issue-24-march-2009/writing-red-riding/]
[Accessed 10/01/2016]

¹⁶⁵ Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.6.

He describes the Moors Murders and the Yorkshire Ripper as ‘the north’s darkest, nastiest secrets, the source of an enduring miasma of evil that swirls around Saddleworth and Chapeltown’ with a ‘special, inviolate place in the national psyche. That place lies in the north’.¹⁶⁶ These murders are figured as specifically Northern, as if Southern murders belong to us all, but Northern ones are Northern alone, and specifically Gothic: a miasma of evil. The idea of these crimes as secret, when they are widely known historical facts, is also a Gothic strategy. Just as Lee’s biography calls Hindley *One of Your Own*, so Maconie locates the uncanny of these cases in their class and geographical familiarity: ‘horror and evil came out of the dark, sounding and looking just as Northern as *our own kind*’ (my emphasis):

the bogeyman was not a nameless fear [...] the bogeyman had a name two names, normal names, and the bogeyman’s two faces stared at you out of the newspapers, hair full of peroxide and brilliantine, eyes full of pure and pitiless evil.¹⁶⁷

This not only utilises a visual forensic and media intertext, then, but also Gothic and fairy-tale generic elements, as ‘the bogeyman’ is juxtaposed with the ‘normal’, expressed in a child-related generic tone which confronts true-crime narratives of the cases with the return of the horror of Hindley and Brady’s crimes against children – which is obviously the point that *Once* and *Our Own Private Island* are making. The idea of murderers looking ‘just as Northern as [y]our own kind’ is another example of true crime’s trope of violence as quotidian (and vice versa). As I discuss in the following section, the visual elision of abuse into normality is key to the specific way true crime and true-crime fictions deal with the return of the repressed.

¹⁶⁶ Maconie, p.191.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Appalling Vistas / In Plain Sight

In 1980 the West Midlands Police successfully appealed against a High Court civil action for assault, which had been brought by the men who were (it would later be ruled in 1991) wrongfully convicted of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. The judge remarked in his summation at the appeal

Just consider the course of events if this action is allowed to proceed to trial. If the six men fail it will mean much time and money will have been expended to no good purpose. If the[se] six men win, it will mean that the police are guilty of perjury, that they are guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were invented and improperly admitted in evidence and the convictions were erroneous. *This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say that it cannot be right that [this trial] should go any further.*¹⁶⁸ (my emphasis)

In his evidence to the John May enquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings in 1989, Chris Mullin quoted Lord Denning's remarks in the Birmingham Six case that such an 'appalling vista' would open up before us were the police shown to have participated in such a deep and widespread conspiracy that it was somehow proof that no such conspiracy could have occurred. In context, Denning (as judge) seems to be saying that such a conspiracy is not only very unlikely, but that the sheer trauma of such a realisation is too great for it to have been truth: the scale of the conspiracy involved in the accused's innocence proves that they must be guilty, the alternative being too unthinkable. Whereas, of course, the reverse was true: Mullin asserts that

with the discovery of the fabricated confessions in the Guildford case, the "appalling vista" has arrived. That this is the moment to acknowledge once and for all that police are capable of fabrication and conspiracy on the scale alleged.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ *McIlkenny v Chief Constable of the West Midlands* [1980] QB 283 [CA].

¹⁶⁹ Chris Mullin, 'Evidence to Sir John May's Enquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings – 1989' [<http://www.chrismullinexp.com/speeches/guildford-and-woolwich-bombings>] [ACCESSED 03/11/16]

In this thesis I use the phrase ‘appalling vista’ beyond its immediate legal context, partly as emblematic of a broader 1970s violence (it having arisen from a watershed case that highlighted the use of physical and psychological terror by the police), but also on account of its geographically-inflected suggestion of political and moral realisation. The appalling vista represents the realisation that you have been surrounded by cruelty and injustice all along: a political uncanny. The real ghost of its haunting is politics: trauma, normalised violence and power. This constitutes, in these texts, a realisation that ‘the bogeyman’ is ‘as Northern as our own kind’, that Hindley is in fact ‘One of Your Own’, that Sutcliffe is ‘every man in pants’, that, as David Peace surmises, the real crime of true crime is social crime. I theorise the appalling vista as a highly-specific political version of the Gothic return, in relation to state-sanctioned and invisibly normalised social violence and coercion. Its visual and spatial elements are key to the metaphor.

It is analogous to Devendra Varma’s assertion that ‘the difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realisation: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse’,¹⁷⁰ but represents, in fact, a third option: realising that the smell you smelt *all along* has in fact been a corpse. It is a revelation of complicity: not only has this awfulness been happening all along and you haven’t seen it, but, you have benefitted from it. I argue that the appalling vista of complicity is the defining emotion of the twenty-first century. And it is a return of the repressed that must compulsively, repeatedly return, since spectacle and its mechanism of political concealment inevitably re-covers itself. Foucault argues that the boundaries of transgression close back around it, so that it inhabits only the

¹⁷⁰ Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England; Its Origin, Efflorescence, Disintegration and Residuary Influences* (London: Arthur Baker, 1957). Vandra is developing an idea Ann Radcliffe came up with to differentiate herself from Matthew Lewis.

space [of] the line it crosses [...] incessantly cross[ing] and recross[ing] a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration [...] thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable.¹⁷¹

I posit that in the case of the appalling vista, as the realisation of transgression, it must be traumatically punctured again and again.

The appalling vista also links to the theme of 'not the aftermath but the after-inflected before' that I have identified, whereby true crime cannot describe the 'before' of the crime in a manner that is unmarked by authorial (and projected audience) knowledge of what comes 'after'. As such, it is a self-reflexive rupture of linear time. Rather than the time after the crimes, and after the killer has become a celebrity, haunting the materiality and temporality of the killer's life before, the knowledge of ongoing crimes or violations both poisonously infects the previously apparently safe time before *and* the time after in which the knowledge of what wasn't known, or what was known but could not be recognised, must be borne. The difference between true crime and true-crime fiction is that the latter articulates this appalling vista, which it reinserts into the discourses of the time (of which true crime is one, as are judges' speeches and newspaper reportage) as a repressed element waiting to make a politically-charged Gothic return.¹⁷²

In these texts, the direct representation of the killers this thesis examines is used as a kind of 'screen memory' for child abuse, simultaneously drawing attention to and concealing it by replacing abuse experienced by fictional characters with gestures

¹⁷¹ Foucault, *Language, Counter Memory and Practice* (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1977), p.33-4.

¹⁷² It both exposes and transforms cultural history itself into an 'appalling vista'. Thus true crime is more like reportage than fiction; it is just one of the kinds of contemporary accounts of the case in circulation at the time. Furthermore, this links back to my earlier point regarding anxieties that accrued to true crime in the mid-twentieth-century as to whether it should be considered literature, reportage, tabloid journalism, or a combination of these genres.

towards these famous real-life cases, in much the same way that Williams's depiction of Brady's autoeroticism is a screen for the crimes he will commit. A technique that hinges on visual display, by linking screen memories with visibility it creates a Debordian political spectacle specifically *of* the concealment of the connectedness of normalised violence and the exceptional-constructed violence of the murderer as ordinary. As I shall discuss in Chapter Two, Debord's theorisation of spectacle, which Andrew Hussey argues draws on Nietzsche's idea of the 'mass secret', posits that liberal democracies exist in a state of (and rely on) permanent general secrecy and surveillance.¹⁷³ A parallel and entwined secrecy and doublethink is enforced around a culture of abuse. The appalling vista condenses the uncanny with the visual and political elements of the Debordian spectacle, where coercion is concealed behind display (of its own lack of concealment): a compulsory performance of, as in the opening lines of *Somebody's Husband*, 'shamming gaumless'; the 'way of thinking that has seen through itself but goes on anyway' that, according to Seltzer is the 'collective idiom of modernity'.¹⁷⁴

The books discussed in this section are able to write *back to* what is left out of official history (which is often abuse, trauma, state violence, the normalised oppression of many groups), and also, what is left out of true crime. This is not simply trauma, but specifically collective trauma – and, indeed, the collective in general, as true crime is usually a radically individualistic genre. This is exactly the project Peace announces in his conception of 'social crime'. These fictions grapple with, and perform the opposite function to 'popular memoir[s] of crime', which, as Schmid identifies, excise celebrity killers from the rest of social and historical discourse through a screen memory of

¹⁷³ Andrew Hussey, *The Game of War: The Life and Death of Guy Debord* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p.190.

¹⁷⁴ Seltzer, 2007, p. 8.

distortion, misrepresentation or exaggeration.¹⁷⁵ Schmid summarises Foucault's point that, in the case of the nineteenth century murderer Pierre Rivière, who produced an exhaustively thorough confessional account of his crime, this account was

regarded as threatening because it presented Rivière as an individual thoroughly integrated into his community. The response to this threat was to subsume Rivière's narrative "under a vast number of narratives which at that period formed a kind of popular memoir of crime" [...] to, "alter the scale, to enlarge the proportions" of Rivière's story [...] to emphasise that the details of the story, "however commonplace and monotonous they may be, appeared 'singular', [...] 'extraordinary', unique"¹⁷⁶

This therefore separates the killer from the everyday world with which readers are familiar. The construction of an imagined contrastive mass is not only essential to exceptionality but also to the exaggeration of membership of the mass *into* exceptionality. As Schmid continues, this distancing creates the illusion that the mundane world is without blame:

we must resist the ways in which true-crime narratives seek to overstate the gap between them and us because [otherwise] we miss the opportunity to make connections between more "mundane" forms of violence and serial murder.¹⁷⁷

What we have seen in Peace's quartet, *Death* and *Once* is just such a resistance, and the explicit performance of those connections.

¹⁷⁵ Schmid, 2005, p.202.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.,pp. 202-3.

Sound and Music, Time and Haunting

Intertext as Time; Music as Quotidian

‘music is the liquid architecture in which we live our lives’

– Rick Smith, quoted by Frank Cottrell Boyce.¹⁷⁸

In this section I examine how literary representations of real crimes use music (and the material conditions of its circulation and reception) as a means of establishing time, space, cultural milieu and tone.¹⁷⁹ An illustrative example of the way in which music is used to set the scene in true crime and true-crime fictions, both thematically and temporally, can be found in the opening scene of the most recent account of the Yorkshire Ripper case, *Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders* by Chris Clark and Tim Tate (2015):

31st December 1978

It started snowing at Nottingham. It would not stop until the end of May.

The M1 was quiet that New Year’s Eve, a combination of the weather and the season. A cheap car cassette player belted out the hits: Tom Robinson’s ‘2-4-6-8 Motorway’, ‘Rat Trap’ by The Boomtown Rats, and – inevitably, given my destination – Kate Bush’s extraordinary ‘Wuthering Heights’¹⁸⁰.

This opening scene is not untypical of the mode of true-crime writing, but, particularly, strikingly, of writing about the Yorkshire Ripper as a subgenre in itself. Clark and Tate are obviously influenced by the ‘Red Riding’ books, with Tate portraying himself as very like the fictional Edward Dunford: a young ambitious reporter on the local paper in Yorkshire, cocky but naïve, hoping to make the leap into the nationals by getting a

¹⁷⁸ Frank Cottrell Boyce, ‘Frank Cottrell Boyce: what’s the point of culture in Brexit Britain?’ *The Guardian*, 15 July 2016.

¹⁷⁹ For analysis of music and songs that have been used themselves to represent crime, see Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁰ Bush’s song is in itself of course also making an intertextual reference, writing back to the Brontë novel. The novel itself haunts Northern criminality, here shading into the Yorkshire Ripper case, but also extremely prominent in the Moors Murders’ myth. For example, in addition to Constantine’s short story, it is also referenced in *See No Evil* when Joe Mounsey comments that ‘WH’ could stand for ‘Wuthering bloody Heights for all I know’; Lee also traces extensive literary antecedents of the Moors Murders case, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Lee, 2010, p.368-9.

Chris Clark & Tim Tate, *Yorkshire Ripper: The Secret Murders* (John Blake Publishing Ltd, London, 2015), p.ix.

‘scoop’ on a big crime. The scene-setting is similar to that in Peace’s Yorkshire texts (both the ‘Red Riding’ series and *GB84*). This kind of time-marking is similar to the popular concept of the annual ‘song of the summer’, and, the release of singles throughout the year constituting a cultural background weather.

Nineteen Seventy Four begins:

*Christmas bombs and Lucky on the run, Leeds United and the Bay City Rollers, The Exorcist and It Ain’t Half Hot Mum.
Yorkshire, Christmas 1974.
I keep it close.*¹⁸¹

Nineteen Eighty’s first chapter similarly starts with a first-person narrative of Hunter driving across the moors with the radio on, but he is listening to the news report of another Yorkshire Ripper attack. *Nineteen Seventy Seven* starts new chapters with radio call-in transcripts from the ‘John Shark’ show that demonstrate contemporary attitudes to crime and to gender. There is a strong theme in Yorkshire Ripper related writings of isolated, determined, obsessive men, investigators of various sorts, alone in their cars with the radio and their mission. The parallels to the Ripper himself are obvious. Thus all these texts construct time upon a framework of references to music and murder. So, these frameworks are established using intertext and historical reference (which is in itself a form of intertext) within a commodity culture: time is structured by reference to cultural products.

Clark and Tate’s opening paragraph is of a kind with a passage in by Kate Atkinson’s *Started Early Took My Dog*, a fictional account of modern day resolution to 1970s police corruption set against the backdrop of the Ripper case:¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Peace, 1999, front matter. Luke Haines’s second volume of autobiography also adopts this tactic pace Peace, prefacing chapters with short *précises* of events in music, news and crime. (See also Chapter Three). Luke Haines, *Post Everything: Outsider Rock and Roll* (London: William Heinemann, 2011).

¹⁸² As I discuss further in Chapter 2.

The Ripper was questioned in Dewsbury after being caught in Sheffield. [...] Tracy remembered being in a corner shop when she heard the news, buying crisps and chocolate for her and her partner. On the beat. The bloke behind the counter had the radio on¹⁸³

Each depicts, in different ways, how events that become news are fused in cultural consciousness with the quotidian commodities that are experienced alongside them, and how they too in turn become quotidian commodities as a result: news artefacts become and are constructed through the cultural material trinkets of history.

As I discussed above, in *Beyond Belief*, the epigram to 'Queue Up For Exhibit Number One' (the eighth chapter) is:

I'm in love wi' Somebody
An' that Somebody is Me . . .
Pop Song

Williams is being deliberately vague, using (an apparently made-up) citation with no direct referent to create a kind of gestural intertext (that implies a broader scope without actually in any way producing it), so as to sketch a milieu of generic working-class mid-twentieth-century pop-cultural quotidian artefacts as a backdrop to the scenes he is setting. Williams therefore conjures a flavour of mass culture rather than an accurate time capsule. Clark and Tate, however, are using their song references to do the opposite – to specifically pinpoint a cultural moment and a fixed node in time. They do so by tying their description of the space and time to songs that were current at the time and so yoke the temporal aspect, but that also relate to the geographical settings of the crimes – the motorway and the moors – and to the cultural expectations and representations of those settings, and so resonate with the cultural meaning – the

¹⁸³ Kate Atkinson, *Started Early, Took My Dog* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), p. 211.

generic depictive conventions – of the criminal cases themselves.¹⁸⁴ Although the book draws attention to only *Wuthering Heights* as being thematically relevant to the location and subject matter of the narrative – as opposed to merely incidentally (and coincidentally) on in the background at the time – all three songs listed here resonate with the facts, settings, and themes of the case Clark and Tate are about to recount, and, if the reader is familiar with them, offer both narrative foreshadowing and a milieu-setting aptness, an arch commentary, upon the case – a part of the reality effect, in fact. The first two songs romanticise the masculine toughness and self-sufficiency (and indeed confer a moral ambiguity upon) the truck driver as type, while the third offers extreme passion, the supernatural, and death, all written into and over a landscape saturated in these meanings.

There is considerable overlap between materiality and intertextuality, because texts are also artefacts; they are objects that populate the physical world in which events take place and in which narratives are consumed. The initial scene-setting in *Beyond Belief*, as I have discussed, features advertisements and a Dracula cinema vampire poster, while the early chapters feature lists of films Brady sees at the cinema, and not only focuses in on *The Third Man*, but specifically on its music and the Harry Lime theme in particular (from *The Third Man* film, (Carol Reed, 1949)), as well as martial music that Brady enjoys – both of which Williams depicts him playing on the piano.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Thus the moors are conveyed as related to and feeding into the same cultural myth as, the novel *Wuthering Heights* itself. Lee, p.369.

¹⁸⁵ Williams, p.54; p.71; p.82.

Similarly, in *Somebody's Husband*, Sutcliffe's youth and young manhood are in part constructed through his musical and fashion tastes.¹⁸⁶ This is entirely unremarkable for any young person, but, it is interesting to note that music is both such an established way of creating a sense of time-setting (as opposed to, say, what films, books, and so on may have been recently released, or, current sporting or even political or news events), and also of a bildungsroman sense of youth and self-construction. Music seems emblematic of time passing, both socially and in the development of the subject. There is also an internal textual sense of time passing in song. A narrative time is compressed and collapsed into a short but temporally-bound temporally-structured experience: long diegetic time becomes usually approximately three minutes (within the pop song tradition) of textual time. Textually as well as socially songs *make time material*. As Jonathan D. Kramer argues,

Music is [...] a temporal art. Music is pure temporality – abstract sonorous shapes moving through and creating time. [...]he manner in which music uses time symbolizes – in complex, personal, yet universal ways – the rhythms, paces and progressions of life.¹⁸⁷

This idea has direct relevance for the connection between music and the representation of crime, in that the sense of lost time and life cut short by crime is in some way alleviated in the listening experience of time throughout the progression of a song, bringing order where otherwise there is rupture.

In addition to acting like a pin holding the narrative (perhaps rather loosely) in place, temporally-speaking (i.e. 'it's the 70s so here's a song that was in the charts at the time') and time-of-life speaking (a young person engaging in the popular culture of their time) these songs are also being used to construct a setting – both of the diegetic world of the text (i.e. music on the radio) but also foreshadowing themes, alluding to the intentions,

¹⁸⁶ Burn, 1984, p.52-5.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan D. Kramer, 'Studies of Time and Music: A Bibliography', *Music Theory Spectrum Vol. 7: Time and Rhythm in Music* (Spring, 1985), pp. 72-106, p.72.

moods, cultural and class positioning of the characters. Thus use of intertextual references allows the author to cram in a great volume of 'stuff' by only saying its name: like summoning a whole book, a whole library using only the index of one volume. As cultural theorists we then have to unpack each name, and each named object pulls out another like a magician's string of handkerchiefs. This, however, is of course exactly its charm, its value, its *function* – to claim and own and *pack in* all this information, all these realms and spaces, all this cultural capital, into a short and densely folded piece of text.

In the final section of this chapter I springboard from a broader discussion of intertext and time to talk about true crime's specifically musical historical time-setting and world-building (as with my materiality section earlier in this section, for example), but also its use of music to *disrupt* straightforward time-setting – to create holes or breaks in linear time, to ensure the past never remains neat or peaceful or stays buried, something that music particularly has the power to do by the way in which it insidiously integrates itself in our everyday lives and our memories. Not only does music act as the vehicle for the past haunting the present – a conduit for the past/memory – but also, listening is an inherently layered experience: you can put music on in the background and have it permeate a scene or a happening, in a way that having a picture in the background or even the television or a film on does not and cannot. It is music's ability to interweave itself into the different layers of a moment – and of a *mise-en-scène* – that gives it a peculiar foreground-and-background-at-once quality that allows it to haunt both texts and in life. The version of Sutcliffe in the 'Red Riding' film *1980* is shown recording his confession on tape with the police under interrogation (which is his only appearance) – and his voice is overlaid over other visuals as well, as if it is bleeding out of its immediate context into surrounding spaces and times, as if it can infect. This constitutes

a return to, or, an attempt by the agents of control within the narrative, to overwrite their mistake and the psychic miasma of the sound of Wearside Jack's tape with this denser, darker kernel of the truth of this true crime. Seltzer suggests in *True Crime* that news constitutes a 'kind of soundtrack to the commuting between private and public spaces. Hence, the reporting on the events becomes part of, and enters into, the event reported on.'¹⁸⁸ This was additionally the case with the 'Wearside Jack' hoax letters, tape, and the resultant broadcasts of the recording in public places throughout the North of England. The hoax indeed links the two themes of news as a soundtrack to public space, and as entering into the case it records; the tape set the emotional timbre and kind of auditory iconography of the place and time, giving it a genre as it were, but also, it intervened in the crimes themselves by influencing the police investigation and enabled the real killer to continue his murderous attacks. Indeed, the 'media apriori' that Seltzer describes is also the cultural 'background radiation' that enabled Humble to think of sending a letter to the media in the first place.¹⁸⁹

In this following section I use close analysis of Gordon Burn's *Alma Cogan* (1991) to demonstrate connections between materiality and intertextuality, music and time, crime and memory, and the way in which other media are able to use music as time and as history. But also, beyond this, how they are able to use music to invoke a directness and intimacy beyond that of other artefacts, and in so doing use them as portals to *a* time: i.e. not something about then but something that bypasses the now, bypasses later impressions, and transports the reader (*as* listener) directly to *then*.

¹⁸⁸ Seltzer, 2007, p.4.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p.2.

Historical Records; Criminal Records

The title and premise of *Alma Cogan*, Burn's first novel, derive from the real-life British 1950s and early 1960s pop singer Alma Cogan, known as 'The Girl with the Giggle in Her Voice', who died of cancer in 1966 at the age of 34. Burn's novel dramatises a reality in which Cogan did not die and in the diegetic present of the novel is recounting her life and experiences in 1986, having retired to the country.¹⁹⁰ Cogan finds herself considering the nature of celebrity and the cruelties of show business ('an equation of celebrity and murder' as the 'blurb' on the back of the book puts it). The narrative leads the reader circumlocutiously towards its dark heart: the final (fictional) relic of Cogan's fame, a cassette copy of the open reel recording Brady and Hindley made of themselves torturing, abusing and murdering Lesley Ann Downey, acquired by an obsessive fan on account of a radio broadcast featuring Cogan's performance of 'Little Drummer Boy' which can be heard playing in the background. The voices of Brady and Hindley could clearly be heard on the genuine recording, which was played as evidence in open court at their trial in May 1966. A BBC profile of Brady claims that 'Jurors were horrified by the Downey tape, and by Brady's 'bland description of the recording as "unusual"'.¹⁹¹ This aspect of the case (and the intense emotional impact of the recording on all who subsequently heard it) is also dramatised in *See No Evil* and *Longford* (see Chapter Two), the latter depicting the eponymous peer receiving – and playing – just such a cassette.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ This is also like the premise of *Myra*, *Beyond Saddleworth*: a thought experiment about what might have happened if Hindley had not died. Rafferty, 2012

¹⁹¹ 'Profile: Moors Murderer Ian Brady', *BBC News* 13 June 2013. [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18690303>] [ACCESSED 06/06/2016]

¹⁹² *This Is Personal* also dramatises the receiving and playing of the Wearside Jack tape, including its musical accompaniment which is not included in the public broadcast, although we never hear the full lyric to 'Thank You For Being A Friend'.

The five pages in which Cogan describes her experience of listening to this particular tape, gradually unfolding the revelation that this is in fact not an archive recording of her Christmas radio performance, but the infamous torture tape from the Brady/Hindley trial, constitutes a passage in which an affective, phenomenological experience of time is very much to the fore. Cogan narrates:

I pick out a cassette dated December 26th, 1964, and load it into the machine. It's a fragment of a Christmas show which went out that evening on Radio Luxembourg. According to the information given on the box, I sing three numbers: 'Happy Days Are Here Again', [...] 'This Time Of Year', and 'Little Drummer Boy'.¹⁹³

It is a live show, which provides both the rationale for the fan in acquiring it and pins the crime in place temporally: the radio show was broadcast as the crime was committed.

Additionally, all the songs Cogan is listed as singing refer to either calendar time or musical timing: the day, the time of year, the beat of a drum and the Christmas tradition.

The tape [...] begins towards the end of 'Happy Days . . .' and proceeds uneventfully until a few lines into the second track. Then the headset communicates a sensation which is like falling through several hundred feet in an air-pocket, with the accompanying drop in air pressure.

It stabilises – 'Evergreens are snowy white/ Sleigh bells ring through the night / This time of year'

The fact that '[t]he tape in fact begins towards the end of 'Happy Days . . ."' implies that the happy times are about to be over, suggesting the kind of foreboding that Gerrard accessed in referring to Hindley herself as 'the end of innocence.' The imagery of the drop through the air and the snowy treetops recalls 'Walking In The Air' (a musical segment in the 1982 animated Christmas film of Raymond Briggs' 1978 children's book *The Snowman*). Finally, the repeated allusions to Christmas underscore the cruelty of the timing of the crime as well as riveting it temporally in place. The combining of the quotidian cosiness of Christmas and 'the girl with the giggle in her voice's' wholesome

¹⁹³ Gordon Burn, *Alma Cogan* (originally London: Secker and Warburg, 1991, this edition London: Faber and Faber, 2004), pp.185-190.

pop music with sexual abuse and murder encapsulates and defamiliarises the ontologically horrifying pollutant quality of the figure (and reality) of the killer.

The entire passage repeatedly emphasises the sense of duration and of the inevitably time-bound linear experience of listening to a recording:

It continues this way for the remaining seven minutes – lurching from almost perfect clarity [...] in one passage, to what could be a third- or fourth-generation, or even older, copy in the next.

Here the physicality of tape and the recording process is centred for the reader, and, in the use of ‘generations’ as a term for recordings, alludes to families and the heteronormative progression expected from one generation to the next, the binding of children into power structures that de-individualise them and render them instrumentalised.¹⁹⁴ It serves as a reminder that the family is coercive even outside of abusive situations and even outside of the kind of direct violence staged on the tape. *However*, this slippage, this sense of the criminal moment being something we cannot hold onto or fix, despite these temporal rivets, might also conjure the physical landscape of the moors. At Ian Brady’s 2013 mental health tribunal it was said that even if he wanted to reveal the location, the ground had shifted so much beneath the surface that it would be impossible to locate the body according to his directions: his crimes – the remains of his victim – *did not stay buried*, or rather, they buried themselves deeper, altered themselves, in the meantime. There is not only a sense of time and progression, of events unfolding, but also of versions of reality intruding into one another, poking through from another layer: as in a ghost story—or, a violent assault. It constitutes a forced manifestation: audio picks up everything, even the trivial, the irrelevant, the

¹⁹⁴ See: Downing’s last chapter; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004); Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham NC: Duke UP, 2006).

incoherent. As with the kinds of visual description I have examined earlier, it brings disparate and jarring elements together in a way that is impure; the audio intertext of true crime is a polluted medium. By foregrounding this impurity, the novel troubles the idea of the direct evidential artefact as unproblematically representing a direct window into a moment of the past.

Cogan refers to the tape as a 'product' – suggesting an artefact which is the endpoint of a process of cultural production, with a specific audience in mind.

'It's as though dropouts caused by physical damage to the tape, or sections of tape corruption or decay, have been laboriously reconstituted, layer on layer, and the original magnetic impulses boosted back to nearly full strength. There is evidence of dubbing, editing, splicing, and sophisticated electronic enhancement of the final product.'

To refer to the tape as a 'product' is to encompass it within the subsequent commodification of music, the 1960s as a period, and murderers as cultural icons. Indeed, the intangible aural features of the recording are given a minute scrutiny in the exact same way in which (as I discussed earlier in this chapter) true crime narratives render physical and visual objects subject to such cataloguing. The novel reveals, therefore, how the inclusion of audio recording transcripts/re-enactments/representations can also become part of the cataloguing completeness of the *textual* or *visual* records. It exposes how common to the point of invisibility such a device is in other representational contexts where forensic and documentary scrutiny is allegedly the means by which the past can be made to divulge its secrets.

This uncanny scrutiny continues:

a fluctuating, almost subliminal undercurrent of discords and weird microtones persists; the tracks are punctuated with indistinct muffled cracks and swoops.

There is none of the hyper-reality that characterises even the oldest of the other tapes. *The density of information is low and resonates with the acoustics of a particular room at a particular but, as it has proved, infinitely reclaimable moment in time.*¹⁹⁵

This sense of the past as 'reclaimable' for and by the present recalls Foucault's identification of transgression as both fleeting and endlessly repetitive: 'only [occupying] the space [of] the line it crosses', and consequently needing to be repeatedly and compulsively breached and re-breached, sealing up after each crossing and becoming once more unimaginable, 'uncrossable'.¹⁹⁶ It also suggests a sense of subjectivity: that this 'moment in time' 'resonates with [...] a particular room'. The listener is always observing from their own standpoint, and imbuing what is heard with themselves and their present – with the experience (to employ the title of another work of Capote's) of 'other voices, other rooms'. The act of recording may be dispassionate, objective; the act of listening is not.

In addition to the forensic intertext of the murder recording, the scene hinges on the historical/pop cultural intertext of a series of records Brady allegedly bought Hindley as a way of commemorating their murders together. Cogan narrates:

It is only since they reopened the search for bodies [...] that it has emerged that Ian Brady bought Myra Hindley a pop record every time he decided to do another killing. On the day of Pauline Reade's death it was the theme music from *The Hill*, a film they had seen together at a cinema in Oldham.

There is some doubt as to whether this is factually correct – Pauline Reade was abducted on the 12th of July 1963, while *The Hill* wasn't released until 1965, and, no single was released of its music, theme song or otherwise – in fact, the film *has* no music. Burn seems to have used *Topping* closely as his source: the account in *Alma Cogan* is

¹⁹⁵ Burn, 1991, p.186, emphasis added. This is literalising the effect Throbbing Gristle allude to in *Very Friendly* (1975) in which the murder of Edward Evans, in a Seltzer-esque atomisation, becomes 'only information'. (See Chapter Three.)

¹⁹⁶ Foucault, 1977, p.33-4.

similarly worded and structured to Topping's marshalling of the same information (and thus has included the same mistake). Topping claimed

On the day of each murder or the day before [Brady] would buy [Hindley] a records [...] The record he bought for her on the day of Pauline Reade's death was the theme music from *The Hill* [...] she remembered seeing the film as part of a double bill, with *Day of the Triffids*, in Oldham.¹⁹⁷

He suggested that

[h]e did not tell her when he gave her the records that they had any significance, but she knew afterwards that he was going to kill someone. [...] She did not believe the records contained any hidden clues to his motives.¹⁹⁸

In fact, claims Lee, 'the film Hindley and Brady saw in Oldham' as a double bill with *Day of the Triffids* was *The Legion's Last Patrol*, and was not until 'two days after Pauline's murder'.¹⁹⁹ This indicates the importance of material and cultural details such as these as time anchors (both of milieu and historical setting), indicating apparently precise verifiable historical time. According to Topping (and/or Hindley) they are empty of textual or symbolic content. Yet in recounting them, Burn now re-replaces them in that symbolic order. At the same time, however, these apparently fixed details undermine their own appearance of authenticity, revealing gaps, fabrications and slippages.²⁰⁰ While Burn's novel is intended to be a blend of fact and fiction (and, of course, we can hardly claim that nonfiction is *not* such a blend either), this does indicate the slipperiness of 'fact' and the deeply ingrained foundation of repetition of a received

¹⁹⁷ Topping, pp.136-7.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.137.

¹⁹⁹ Lee, p.401. The most up to date and thorough biography of Hindley, *One Of Your Own*, makes no mention of any record given around Pauline's murder, only a gold watch for Hindley's birthday, and one of the couple's claims about the plan for this crime, that they would offer the victim a set of records as a reward for helping look for a lost glove. Ibid., p.111; 401.

²⁰⁰ For example, that we cannot say for sure when the watch was given; that Brady disputes this and other aspects of the crime plan (the lights flashing to indicate that Smith should enter the house), and gave different accounts to different people as well as verifiably lying in some cases (and so casting doubt of others which cannot be verified); that either Hindley or Topping misremembering may be the cause of the film mix up; that memory is slippery and much of the contextual social history that would allow us to interrogate their claims is lost.

mythology in the replication of these cases, these ‘infinitely reclaimable moment[s] in time’.

In addition to repeating Topping’s information that John Kilbride’s murder was commemorated with Gene Pitney’s ‘Twenty-four Hours from Tulsa’, and Keith Bennett’s with Roy Orbison’s ‘It’s Over’, the novel states ‘for Edward Evans, whom Brady murdered with a hatchet on their living-room carpet, it was Joan Baez’s version of ‘It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue’. This litany of objects – hatchet, living-room carpet, record – places the victim and murderer within a framework of physicality, as if the people involved are objects too; as if, in fact, they are all pieces in a board game or a scale model dolls’ house, that can be moved around to represent the story.²⁰¹ It is a way of conjuring history through the stage directions, or perhaps more accurately, through the props list. This is practically pure iconography, pure *mise-en-scène*.

‘Girl Don’t Come’ by Sandie Shaw was Brady’s present to commemorate the murder of Lesley Ann Downey. But ‘Little Red Rooster’ by the Rolling Stones is the record that Hindley would associate with this killing. That’s what was playing at the funfair in Miles Platting in Manchester when they approached the ten-year and asked her to help them carry some shopping back to the car and then to their house

The exact moments of crossing over, from before the crime to once it is too late, are fixed in real-life time again here: the victim was ensnared before the song even finished and during that short time one reality – in which Lesley would live and go home to her family and have her life ahead of her – was destroyed, and another future, short and unbelievably cruel, was put in its place. The song and the place paint an economical thumbnail sketch of a fairground, and with it a whiff of the ‘gaudy barbarism’ of mid-century working-class entertainments that trails behind the Moors Murders myth: this is

²⁰¹ This is reminiscent of Throbbing Gristle’s ‘Very Friendly’ (1975) also, which may have been another analogue for Burn. (See Chapter Three).

one of the elements that becomes repeated, encoded, echoed back – for example in Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘The Devil’s Wife’ poem about Hindley, ‘looking at playgrounds, fairgrounds. Coloured lights | in the rain.’²⁰²

Music and murder both create fixed points in time that link them together, trapping an experience into a concrete object in the form of records and clues.²⁰³ Thus both are engaged in literal objectification – putting a sensation, an idea, a myth, into an object – but as a result also *contain* it. They allow that experience or idea to be enclosed in that object and not impact beyond it, allowing it to be consumed and its connection to everyday experience elided by its ubiquity. By forming a media backdrop (e.g. the news of a crime, the playing of a song repeatedly on the radio, the playing of the Wearside Jack tape in public spaces) both become unexamined ‘architecture’ or background to the quotidian. As I argue about Clark and Tate’s opening passage, this temporal fixing (re)creates an exact, static node in time. *Alma Cogan* also does this not only, as Clark and Tate, for the transmission of the song, but also for the moment of the crime:

Like all their child victims, according to Myra Hindley, she went ‘like a lamb to the slaughter’. It was between five and six in the evening on Boxing Day, December 26th, 1964.

The repetition of the day at the beginning and end of the section of the novel which depicts the recording of Lesley’s murder bookend her death, acting as a concentrated portal into that moment. The recording *of* Downey’s death and the recording of the song playing *over* her death occupy the same temporal, sonic *and* literal space:

Brady made the little girl take off her clothes and pose for pornographic pictures on the bed, before raping her and strangling her with a piece of string. Hindley – standing by the window while all – some – of this was going on (the black wig she had worn to the funfair removed or still in place?), tuned the radio to Radio

²⁰² Carol Ann Duffy, ‘The Devil’s Wife’, *The World’s Wife* (London: Picador, 1999), pp.42-6.

²⁰³ Like serial killers’ trophies.

Luxembourg, allowing my voice to bring the message [...] that the rest of the world was still there and all right’.

She interrupted her reverie to help Brady pack a gag into Lesley Ann’s mouth, and to run a bath to get rid of any dog hairs or fibres on her body.

pa-ruppa-pum-pum . . .’

The drumming here is strongly reminiscent of that in *Beyond Belief* when Brady is depicted using a tape recorder to record himself masturbating. Williams’s novel can be read, therefore, as drawing upon, and in intertext with, the real recording of Downey’s murder, which was played in open court at their trial at which Williams was present throughout, and which is itself just as fixed in time as the broadcast heard in the background of the recording. This masturbation scene is a ‘screen memory’ for the Downey recording. Yet there is no internal signal that this is the case; it functions as a reference that isn’t glossed, in the same manner that, as Pleasance argues, the case is coded within ‘Ashton and Elaine’. It is only by reading it against Alma Cogan, by being the reader that, as Pleasance suggests, ‘knows too much’, that this decoding can take place, prompting an astonishing realisation for a scene that is already (in apparently simply discussing the autoerotic practises of someone who later becomes a rapist-murderer), jarringly light and playful. In Constantine’s short story the references overlay the narrative shape of the Moors Murders myth, using it as a framework upon which to build an alternative, innocent and positive, edifice of working-class life. In contrast, Williams’s takes an apparently innocent (if sexual and subject to the text’s voyeurism) episode in Brady’s life and pokes holes of appallingness in it in such a way that the shape of the crime shines through *if* the reader lines their eye up just right. The fictional masturbation tape in Williams’ novel explicitly and horrifyingly foregrounds *the very reason her killers made the recording of Downey’s death in the first place* – as pornography, as material for their own sexual and personal gratification – confronting the evidential intertext with the artefact’s non-evidential (pre-evidential) use. This

constitutes a return of the repressed of the immense and insurmountable gulf between conflicting readings of the incident *as readings*; i.e. between how Brady sees it, how his victim sees it as, and how it is projected for the implied reader – three very different perspectives whose shared space, shared apparent meaning, is profoundly troubling.²⁰⁴ Indeed, the juxtaposition of the seductive and horrific can be seen as the crux of the full awfulness of abuse: a clash of phenomenologically and ontologically opposing and yet traumatically converging modes and affects. This clash and the foregrounding of the point at which they meet is of critical importance to the way true crime fictions re-centre the radically pollutant nature of killers and of sexual violence within the narrative, counterpoising sensuality with suffering to implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) fill in true crime's compulsively fetishised lacuna.

It is not *just* that true crime fictions force the return of the victim's pain, but that they force the return of the abuser's pleasure, and thus shatter and refuse the smoothly blank fetishised spectacular screen-memory of killer as celebrity and abstractly evil monster that enables them to mythically evade the concrete realities of their crimes, covering over messy, fibrous, grotesque reality with iconography, replacing one set of emotionally-freighted embodied materialities (the acts of torture, terror and degradation inflicted on their victims; the physical and emotional sexual gratification obtained by their inflictors) with another, purely visual, safely distanced, external set (the body of the killer, their furnishings, etc.). In its apparent ability to convey the subjectivity of the killer symbolically through their material surroundings, true crime actually shirks, and absolves its readers of, the responsibility to confront its actuality. The fact that Williams includes such a reference but elides it, while Burn

²⁰⁴ Of course every person who reads it then has their own reading of the scene as well, adding yet another layer to the palimpsest.

renders it structurally central and foregrounds it, is emblematic of the way, as genres, true crime fictions unsettle and bring forth these aspects while true crime smooths them over into an entertaining and aesthetically compelling surface, retaining them, keeping them close: *burying them and marking the graves with images*.

The fact that Williams chooses to represent Downey's murder *as* Brady's autoerotic practice suggests that for Brady *there is no-one else there*: i.e. for him Lesley Ann and even Hindley herself are merely things with which he has done as he wishes. This is akin to how the book's masturbation-with-mirror scene is also a stand-in for his abuse perpetrated against children and young people. Williams's use of the repeated word 'drum' is quite clearly a deliberate echo of the 'Little Drummer Boy'. These song's lyrics are also depicted weaving in and out of the abuse in *Alma Cogan*, creating a sort of 'out of body experience' impression of trauma and haunting. There's something aptly horrifying about the novel's depiction of him using whatever materials he has at his disposal to reflect his own image, his own sexual gratification, his own sexual attention, back to himself - as if, chillingly, his victims were, to him, simply materials he had at his disposal. Williams foregrounds the scene, as with the text's other masturbation episodes, in Brady's narcissism: 'To someone who spends hours alone, a tape recorder is an engrossing toy. And especially to someone who is interested in himself.' There is, as with the mirror scene (and indeed, with *Alma Cogan*'s multiple generation recordings – and, with the proliferation of these killers' images in popular culture in the years since their crimes) a sense of doubling, repeating: of energy feeding off itself in a closed circuit. Williams's depiction of Brady encouraging himself becomes a series of voices speaking only to themselves: 'Speak into the machine, go on . . .' 'then seconds later to

hear the voice tell you from the empty air' 'This is Ian whisperin' Brady'.²⁰⁵ The former quotation shadows the Downey murder evidence, the way her tormenters commanded her to speak for their entertainment. Once again the reader is presented with Brady himself being placed in the position of his own victims. And this moment both fills and effaces that lacuna of Lesley Ann's death: we are taken to the edge of it and yet cannot access it. Even the text itself signals its own lacunae, its own lack, in the form of ellipses. This textual form of presenting the pauses in the tape is unnervingly mimetic. Williams's writing mimics speech, keeping the focus on sound, while the words 'drum drum drum' depict the 'sexy music' he's put on in the background.

And the moments when you are *utterly* bored . . . what's wrong wi' – wait a minute, let's get some sexy music on the record player, Bolero, right . . . Drum, drum, drum, drum . . .'

This drumming forms a refrain that carries a theme or mood and is repeated, just as the 'Harry Lime theme' is repeated in *Beyond Belief* (not only as a musical product, but also in the novel's own inclusion of Harry Lime as a literary echo, i.e. a recurring comparison made between Brady and Lime).²⁰⁶ Thus the novel creates a kind of sonic cinematic poesis.

Williams's Brady continues, '[t]his is Ian whisperin' Brady and this is my hand, which I am holdin' in the other hand, it feels gude an' warm, Drum, drum, drum, drum . . .'.²⁰⁷

This phrasing can imply that he is naming himself 'Ian Whisperin' Brady', putting his self-talk at the centre of his identity for a moment, and foregrounding his actions,

²⁰⁵ Williams, p.110.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.74; p.81; pp.83-7; pp. 91-2.

²⁰⁷ Strangely, it sounds as though this is a reference to radio DJ Robert 'Whispering Bob' Harris, an English music presenter most famous for presenting the BBC2 music programme *The Old Grey Whistle Test* – and it would fit, as he is named after his quiet breathy vocal style as a host – but it cannot be because Harris's radio career did not begin until 1970. Presumably, however, for it to become his nickname, it is possible that it was a common radio presentation technique (many DJs adopt it still today) and in popular parlance in regards to radio shows. Harris even presented for Radio Luxembourg (which would fit with the Alma Cogan recording featured on the tape of the killing) but not until 1975–77.

anchoring them to himself: a self-palimpsest. On the other, it can suggest that he is whispering his own name (as in, 'this is Ian whisperin' "Brady") – splitting himself into two versions with the two names. Meanwhile, the slow repetitive diction here and throughout the scene is eroticised, hypnotic, like the impression Williams is saying Brady was attempting to create (i.e. Williams is matching his tone to his theme) and like that of his narrator in the earlier group exposure scene. Brady's narration here repeatedly returns specifically to himself: 'An' this is Ian Brady's hand unbuttonin' his waistcoat . . . Drum, drum this is Ian Brady's hand unbuttonin' . . .'. As in chapter eight, he is presented as very much not using himself as a stand-in for someone else, but rather deliberately having sexual contact with himself qua himself: his own name, his own image, is integral. The repetition here is the playback, so, you get both voices following on. This aural layering multiplies the figure at their centre, creating several Bradys overlapping from various (recent) pasts, in various precise slices of time, all converging on the closed but multiple sexual feedback loop – a cultural proliferation of his own – of his immediate autoerotic moment, allowing the small, concrete space of the bedroom to occupy many spaces at once, material and immaterial at the same time.

Recording transcripts always have a ghostly air - they are, after all, disembodied voices, intangible reminders of a transient corporeality. In *Alma Cogan*, stage-direction-like description of the sounds at the beginning of the attack are theatrical, but perhaps even more so are reminiscent of a séance:

(Three loud cracks, systematic, even-timed)
(Music goes fainter)
(Footsteps)
(Sounds on tape cease).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Burn, 1991, p.189.

Likewise, the disembodied element is the same with Williams's scene of Brady making a tape of himself masturbating – and indeed this seems an audio parallel with the 'peeping-Tom grin' floating in the mirror: both instances of Brady's physically-effaced self-involved attention are strikingly incorporeal given the subject matter; actions are presented in vivid, intimate immediacy, but without actors. Both are, also, screen memories, stand-ins, for the photographs and recordings he made of his victims, that were created for his own pleasure before they became evidence. The torture tape is fixed in time, as a recording, as are the radio broadcast/songs captured on the same tape. Because of this, not only is the tape available for intertext (it is, in its own way, a cultural product) but also it (*and* Williams's use of it) flags up how recordings are hauntings, because they bring disparate elements and times close to each other, they haunt each other, disrupting linear time creating a palimpsest of all the times that go into the song.

This too is readable in Williams's masturbation scene. Its language is uncanny, magical, and theatrical – like a séance – echoing the language of the earlier teenager sexual exploration episode (in which Brady and his school friends exposed their penises to one another) – a scene that itself signalled forward to Brady's future as a child abuser, referring to his friends as 'kids out of [... their] depth', and 'rabbits' waiting to be vanished by a 'conjurer'.²⁰⁹ The imagery in both suggests the idea of summoning spirits or forces outside the ordinary and (apparently) safe realm of the everyday. They suggest a source of power harnessed through a dangerous and morally troubling activity. At hypnotic pace, the fictional Brady continues

²⁰⁹ Williams, p.80-82.

How weird weird weird to say softly, Seig Heil I am Ian Brady this is my hand I am sitting in Westmoreland Street on the first of November . . . then seconds later to hear the voice tell you from the empty air intimate, caressing, I am Ian Brady this is my hand . . . And a week later you can still turn it on. Seig Heil I am Ian Brady this is my hand . . .²¹⁰

He is affirming rather than effacing his identity from the autoerotic ritual, in a manner more clearly affirmative, more directly tied to his identity, his name, his self-worship ('Sieg Heil I am Ian Brady') than the ambiguous effect of the semi-obsured face in the earlier episode. Brady's announcement of the date and place also recalls the Alma Cogan tape, and like the kind of evidential cataloguing common to both a criminal case and true crime's fascination with spatio-temporal detail. The effect is at once performative, forensic and mystical. The sense that the recording – the happening – will persist, remaining in time, is reiterated in the final lines of the scene in *Alma Cogan*:

I read somewhere that no musical vibrations are ever lost: that even though they are dispersed, they will go on vibrating through the cosmos for eternity[; an] electric ghost trapped in the tape shell.²¹¹

The horrifying implication at the heart of the doublings suggested by these recordings, Brady's multiple voices on them, and their haunting quality of being temporally-fixed, yet also temporally compulsively-returning, lies in the realisation that this is why he made the tapes, and this is what they were to him: literally the sexually-entrapped, perpetually-tortured ghosts of his victim. The realisation that 'a week later [...] he] can still turn [...] on', and relive their final moments of suffering again and again for his own pleasure, as if he were raping and killing them all over again; as if even in death they cannot escape being made to perform, made to suffer, for his pleasure.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Burn, 1991, p.190.

Haunting Melodies

Songs function within these texts *as* ghosts: i.e. as that which intangibly and insinuatingly bring the past close. Music is invisible – which is also what the supernatural is predominantly figured as: the invisible realm. They have a background, atmospheric quality (seeming to pervade landscape) that other types of media do not; to a far greater extent coexisting alongside what else is going on. It is in fact *sound*, hidden by the obsession with the visual spectacle, that *haunts* these texts: the ‘Wearside Jack’ tape soaking into the landscape and the dreams and the psyche of the 1970s North, and the unthinkable unrepeatable lacuna of the Leslie Ann Downey tape played in court,²¹² the lead in from ‘Little Drummer Boy’ curdling into the apparition of agony and abuse. The song resonates across these texts – and it recurs like a refrain through *Nineteen Seventy Four* in a way that the other songs mentioned in the novel do not – appearing in different versions and echoes, mimicking a contested history, in which there cannot be only one version of truth, and the past is never allowed to stay still.

The sense of the audio echo and repeating refrain I discussed in *Beyond Belief* is likewise very strong in the ‘Red Riding’ books, which are full of songs and snippets of radio news and talk shows and police radios and press conferences and tape recordings, from both media and forensic contexts. Dunford especially is rarely without his ‘Phillips pocket memo’ in *Nineteen Seventy Four*. The uncanny aspect of this device and of audio in general is repeatedly alluded to throughout the quartet: ‘radio alive with death’,²¹³ ‘I switched on the microphone. I reeled back from the inevitable wail.’²¹⁴ The ‘Red Riding’ texts are full not only of the materiality of recorded sound but also of immaterial echoes,

²¹² Although, The Daily Mail published the transcript in full in 2002 (because of Hindley’s death).

²¹³ Peace, 2000, p.3.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 2002, p1.

memories, nagging doubts, ghosts and visions and flashbacks and other temporal disruptions, as if another form of recording were at work. The 'Wearside Jack' tape is written out in full in *Nineteen Eighty*,²¹⁵ including its musical reference (the cassette recording ended with part of 'Thank You for Being a Friend' (1978) by Andrew Gold), and immediately followed by the transcription of a recording of one of the senior police officers giving an interview to the Yorkshire Evening Post.²¹⁶

'Little Drummer Boy' is one of the first things Dunford hears in the narrative of *Nineteen Seventy Four*, 'wondering why the Rollers hadn't covered The Little Drummer Boy', and the last thing he thinks of at the end of the novel, the end of his life, saying a prayer for all the dead girls and for 'the unborn' he 'sat there, singing along to The Little Drummer Boy, with those far-off days, those days of grace, coming down. Waiting for the blue lights.'²¹⁷ In between he has 'sat through Petula's Little Drummer Boy'; heard 'muffled sounds of a record playing, The Little Drummer Boy. The rats were at my ear, whispering harsh words, calling me names, breaking my bones worse than any sticks or [stones]' in his nightmare that pre-emptively echoes the secret lair in which the paedophile ring abused their victims; and immediately after hears it with 'The radio on, Lulu's Little Drummer Boy', as if his nightmare has seeped into the real world, and vice versa, while he is driving away from arguing with a missing girl's mother, Paula, with whom he has been involved and to whom he has behaved abusively.²¹⁸ He hears it on the radio again while he is being beaten and sexually assaulted by a pair of policemen acting as enforcers for the corruption and paedophilia of local powerful men within and outside the force, 'Lulu or Petula or Sandy or Cilla, The Little Drummer Boy washing

²¹⁵ Ibid., 2001, p.5-6. It's also repeated when played again by journalists, p.57.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 1999, p. 7; p.295.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 202; p.224; p. 226.

over me, as Christmas lights became prison lights'.²¹⁹ In each instance he hears it at specific points where the echo of the 'Moors Murders' case seems not only deliberate but to comment on the events around him. There is also a woozy, dissociative sense of the music as a cocoon, a blurring of time and perception, as though the song were something to focus on as the end draws near – like 'Abide With Me' being played as the Titanic sank – that conjures Lesley Ann, her final moments, the thin protection of going to another place in her mind, perhaps, as her body is tortured; the false hope that 'the rest of the world was still there and all right', or, if not false, at least cruelly unreachable and far away, just as Dunford too in the extremity of his pain and his death seems to hover outside himself in the song, his own ghost watching his demise. This sense of time breaking down, experientially, under the weight of trauma, is explicitly conveyed in *Death* in a manner that foregrounds the materiality of recording: when Trevor tries to remember his (alleged; possibly real but displaced) abuse and abduction by Hindley,

The next few seconds were hard to piece together. What he saw wasn't continuous. It came to him in vivid fragments. Flashes and splinters. *As thought the film of his life had been slashed to ribbons and then taped back together.* [...] There were times when he thought he must have been in that room for longer, but part of him had shut down blotting those bits out. [...] There were times, too, when he felt he might still be in there.²²⁰

The 'Christmassy' and innocent ambiance, as in the *Alma Cogan* scene, is undercut ('Christmas lights became prison lights') in a strikingly similar fashion to killer couple Shauna Hoare, 21, and her 28 year old boyfriend, Nathan Matthews, who watched a parody of the song 'Do You Want To Build A Snowman' from Disney's *Frozen* (2013) on youtube called 'Do You Want To Hide A Body' the night after they murdered 16 year old Becky Watts.²²¹ It also makes the same point as the contemporaneous Simon &

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 245.

²²⁰ Thomson, pp.136-7, emphasis added.

²²¹ 'Becky Watts trial: Shauna Hoare searched YouTube for 'Do you want to hide a body' video', *The Independent*, 26 October 2015.

Garfunkel song '7 O'Clock News/Silent Night' (1966) – a song that uses sound collage, juxtaposing the the Christmas carol 'Silent Night' over a simulated news bulletin of the actual news events of August the 3rd 1966, including reportage of serial murderer Richard Speck's trial. James Bennighof summarises its content as a 'blunt [...]ironic commentary on various social ills by juxtaposing them with tenderly expressed Christmas sentiments.'²²² Similarly, Hindley and Brady have recreated, either unintentionally or to enhance their enjoyment of their brutality, the same crude irony at work in that song: the cosy Christmas sentiment undercut by everyday cruelty. Unlike the Simon & Garfunkel song , however, whose targets are largely war, politicians and the news media, this cruel irony strikes at the heart of the nuclear family, emphasised by their forcing the child to call her torturers 'Mum' and 'Dad'. The reality of abuse taking place up and down the land in private homes, that Christmas, and every Christmas, and every day, is so momentous and appalling that even the hint of it in this evidential artefact cannot be countenanced.

Pop culture is *deeply invested* in the use of cross-media intertexts, true crime especially, given its obsession with cataloguing evidence and assigning (deviant) influences. Intertext itself also acts as a kind of haunting, disrupting linear textual time, bringing the distant close, allowing extra-textual elements to appear, tethered to the text but not *of the text*, disrupting diegetic time and the coherent whole of the narrative from elsewhere and *elsewhen* with snags and intrusions and allusions. Haunting, like dirt, is matter out of place (and unlike it, time out of time). It allows another world, another narrative, another presence, to be part of the text and close to it but also distant,

²²² James Bennighof, *The Words and Music of Paul Simon* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), p.32.

removed, transparent, not necessarily perceptible, visible only under the right circumstances and with the requisite prior knowledge: an occult history of the text itself. Intertext is one of the key features of true crime, all of which work towards its main goals: to combine and yet appear to contrast both hiding and showing (spectacle, lacunae), and the ordinary and the exceptional. Intertext is at the crux of the material and reputational – to both the creation of settings (place names, names of brands, commodities, records), and of myth (the proliferation of the details and tropes of a criminal case's representation legacy until it condenses into common knowledge).

Chapter 2: Television and Film

Continuing my argument from Chapter One that the stylistic fundamentals of true crime are depictions of material bodies in spaces, meta-presentations of the mechanics of media crime representation, and intertextual references to other cultural products, this chapter examines how these work in a screen media setting, using screen texts that together form an intertextual corpus commenting on how official and resistant myths are made from available cultural materials. I also examine how they foreground elements of exploitation and complicity lying at the heart of both popular and academic ambivalence towards true crime and the Moors Murder and Yorkshire Ripper cases in particular. Ultimately the meaning of the criminal figures represented in these docudramas and docudrama-influenced dramas resonate far beyond the individual cases depicted, and are determined by the dialectical back and forth of their proliferation, a continual negotiation, forming a conflicting composite of all representations accruing to them.¹

My analysis explores the themes of embodied gender and sexuality, how media shapes as well as records criminal narratives, and their depiction through and of pre-existing tropes of Northern mid-century spaces and times. These thematic areas encompass many of true crime's focal points (as both a (semi) discrete genre and also a set of

¹ There is much conflict over the terminology applied, with 'dramadoc' and 'docudrama' vying to inflect the exact levels of fictionality in a given hybrid text (see Derek Paget, *No Other Way to Tell It: Docudrama on Film and Television*, Manchester: MUP, 2011; Alan Rosenthal, *Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1998), whilst 'true crime' in relation to television and film may not distinguish between either, and 'real crime' refers to the kind of factual reconstructive crime television of, say, *Crimewatch*. See Deborah Jermyn, *Crime Watching: Investigating Real Crime TV* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006). Paget defines 'drama coding' and 'documentary coding' and how these can be mixed to different effects. Paget, 'Codes and Conventions of Dramadoc and Docudrama', *The Television Studies Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp.196-208, p.197.

limitlessly deployable strategies and concerns) that operate across categories and that construct one from another. For example, gender forms that recur in true crime and in these criminal cases are constructed through and by media and performance. Likewise pre-existing representations of spaces and times contribute to these class and gender formations and these media artefacts. The intersection of all of these areas shapes the creation of these narratives as Northientalist (regional and class stereotyped) gendered genre-entertainment stories of real-life crime within a specific period and a specific set of cultural and consumer object relations. This constitutes a fetishisation and mythologisation of certain landscapes, temporal segments, gender performances, desires, public and private spaces, domestic, labour and consumer relations, power structures, cultural artefacts – and subsequent invisibility of others. The relational patterns and constructional traditions of these narratives are refined with repetition and proliferation, gain legitimacy, and become history. Thus, real-life criminal cases become codified and expressed through the generic traditions of true crime onscreen.

Screen re-imaginings of real events date back to the beginnings of cinema. Raymond Fielding notes the presentation of reconstructions as factual footage in early newsreels.² D. W. Griffith's influential epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915) re-constructed civil war events (from a notoriously biased and white supremecist perspective), while in the 1920s Cecil B. DeMille staged historical and (supposedly factual) biblical episodes. Alan Rosenthal credits Russian directors Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin (active from the 1920s) with the first 'serious' use of the form, including in their most famous works, *The Fall of St. Petersburg* and *October*, respectively, lending it 'a strong political

² Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911-1967* (Oklahoma, UOP, 1972).

bent' from the outset.³ As these examples indicate, from its inception the form was foregrounded – and contested – as political, as one might expect from an exercise in fixing and defining reality.⁴ Rosenthal also locates in these early examples, 'some of the basic questions of truth and influence' that continue to pervade the form. Picking up the thread of Fielding's point about un-signalled reconstruction in newsreels, Rosenthal remarks on the 'troubling' way in which 'much of Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's work is still exhibited today as if it were genuine archive material of the Russian Revolution'.⁵ The medium's enduringly slippery relationship with the truth, or with being used as if it were truth, reveals a disinclination or inability, both internally and in its reception, to clearly signal what is and is not truth, or to signpost its lack of answers on this front.

Leslie Woodhead, (producer, director and former head of Granada Television's docudrama department) recommends approaching all quasi-fictional screen representation of real-life events as one broad 'form [with] a spectrum that runs from journalistic reconstruction to relevant drama with infinite graduations along the way' and 'refuse[s] tidy and comprehensive definition.'⁶ This informs my decision not only to divest from any attempt to distinguish levels of factualness, but also, to resist the ingrained and comprehensive disciplinary desire to separate out film and television representations. Although they have different production and reception techniques, histories and critical fields, they also share a great many methods and resonances; just as Rosenthal finds such combining necessary in preparing an edited collection on fact-fictional media, so, too do I here. Indeed, in a true-crime context these media genres

³ Alan Rosenthal, ed. *Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1998), pp.1-2.

⁴ However, what kind of politics? Conservative and right wing elements of true crime and other associated forms of reconstructionist entertainment are of course political too.

⁵ Rosenthal, p.2.

⁶ Leslie Woodhead, the 'Guardian Lecture', BFI, 19 May 1981.

become particularly blurred by the doubly hybrid genres of the television film and serial (popular formats for this subject matter), as well as the more usual television series and cinema film.⁷ While I will attempt to keep in mind their distinctiveness from one another, and identify such moments where these distinctions have an impact upon the ways in which these killers are constructed, it is more coherent and productive to fit them together than pull them apart.

Rosenthal's attempt to draw a distinction, even as he recognises its inadequacy, indicates a cultural and cognitive difficulty inherent to genre – the idea of purity is and always was a fantasy for any genre, and indeed, any category. As we have seen in the previous chapter with true-crime writing, at no point in their history has it been possible to isolate the 'factual' from the 'fictional' in film, television, written (or any other) representations of real-life events. This should not surprise us – all representation is construction, there is no unbiased, accurate, truly real mediation of anything, and even the apparently baldest fact is not 'pure' – and yet, the binaries of language and thought frustrate a persistent awareness of this perpetual mutability. Crime particularly, in both its real and representational forms, throws this into relief as it highlights the competing polyphony of meaning arising from traumatic or controversial events, and our reliance on narrative and interpretation, and the cultural contexts that create them, for meaning even in our own immediate experiences.

Onscreen the centrality of the visual that we have seen so far in written true crime offers a different set of opportunities and challenges. There are things which can be presented in written form that cannot in the visual and vice versa, particularly for a genre for

⁷ 'Red Riding' is a good example of this overlap.

which strategic lacunae are a particularly vital and sensitive requirement. More pragmatically: it is possible in writing to focus in upon one part of an action or image without the display of unwanted materials in shot or loss of visual coherence that would accompany the same action or image if it were depicted onscreen – and to do so without announcing this concealment, in a way that a visual occlusion would inevitably do. Thus the spectacle *of* concealment is more foregrounded onscreen. There are ways around this, but these carry their own constraints and draw attention to themselves. A mise-en-scène is inescapable on screen, and thus any technique employed to occlude or distract from it is just as immediately noticeable, and indeed, becomes a part of a (different) mise-en-scène itself. This has direct implications for the interplay between concealment and display, as in a screen media context the balance between the two must be even more carefully negotiated. For example, as I have already discussed, *Portrait* presents a visual depiction of the fictional Sutcliffe masturbating but in such a way that neither a penis nor its manipulation are directly shown; however we are still shown the body of the killer under these circumstances. This is in contrast to Brady's teenage masturbation and mutual masturbation scenes in *Beyond Belief*, which, whilst not 'pornographic' or 'obscene', do describe this in a way that could not be presented visually onscreen for a factual still-living child murderer (or that would certainly have to be handled differently, to avoid the written text's overt focus on the sexually manipulated genitalia of a child). The tension between foregrounding the visual spectacle of the killers' sexual/ised bodies and the occluding of the reality of the violence of its actions – and society's violent interactions that enable and shape such actions – is at the heart of the Debordian spectacle of true crime. Likewise, the tensions inherent in turning certain kinds of bodies and landscapes, and certain modes of social memory, into an iconography of true

crime and thus into backdrops for entertainment also require a similar balancing, self-effacing spectacle.

Bodies

In a screen media rather than written setting, true crime's construction of bodies in space is dependent on cinematic *mise-en-scène* (the physical world presented within the shot).⁸ Indeed, body itself is part of this *mise-en-scène*: it enables cosmetology, costume-wearing and casting selection to indicate the character's self-fashioning and social milieu as well as their racial, class and gender presentation markers; it enables the signaling of time markers; it forms part of the actor's working persona that in turn shapes expectations of the role; and it is part of the iconography of genre. What in a written context emerges as minutely catalogued quotidian is in screen texts the minutely mocked-up *mise-en-scène*. Many aspects of the genre stem from this locus of materiality: surveillance, performativity, self-fashioning, visibility, spectacle and the related tension between display and concealment. Staging and containing the body of the celebrity murderer allows it to be used as a repository of both an abstract, radical, inhuman 'evil' and of demonised physical tropes associated with specific social markers, in these cases, those culturally associated with an imagined Northern working class. The depiction of these is likewise doubly positioned within an imaginary landscape that is both ahistorically Gothic and stereotyped, based upon the (genre-constructed) settings within which these real-life killers operated – in this case the 1960s and 1970s North of England. The reduction of celebrity murderers to a series of detachable, deployable

⁸ I use the hyphenated spelling 'mise-en-scène' here and unhyphenated 'mise en scène' in Chapter One to differentiate my meaning. In this chapter I refer to the cinematic construction of set and its contents, while in the previous chapter the term expresses an episode of staging within a passage: a more literal use to indicate a scene within a scene, a spectacle (of display).

physical tropes makes such killers into iconography for film villains, the ‘costume drama’ techniques of the true crime industry, and even Halloween costumes.

Representations of the three killers considered here are both constructed from, and in turn carry within them, their specific socio-temporal spatial moment – as well as the moment of the representation’s creation. The presentation of these killers’ bodies in these texts is always enmeshed with the depiction of space, both exterior and interior, and so, although I separate the various themes in this chapter into discrete sections, this is purely for clarity; themes do not operate in a discrete or separate way within the texts themselves. Indeed, as demonstrated in the previous chapter with regard to physicality and place in a written context, so too in this chapter will it become apparent that the construction and the (re-) imagining of these killers are still physically contingent on setting. Their portrait, within a visual media context as well as in their cultural narrative more generally, traditionally sits in a geographical frame. Thus, the investigation undertaken in this thesis operates at the juncture between time, space, and the figure of the killer. This ‘Bodies’ section falls into two parts structured around the following propositions: that firstly, these bodies are constructed through mise-en-scène, intertext and (filmic) spectacle. Secondly, that the result of such constructions is performativity, reification and spectacle in the Debordian sense of a social relation arising from and creating commoditised artifacts encouraging passivity and a predominantly neutralised or rerouted political resistance. Such a social relation, nevertheless, still offers resistant possibilities within itself for revealing, drawing attention to and propagating otherwise forbidden or elided knowledges.

Evidential Intertext and Mise-en-scène

Screen bodies carry the performance of gender and identity and align the texts in which they feature within a system of generic positioning, in much the same way in which the spaces of the text are constructed from both the physical attributes and the camera presentation of sets and locations which have genre resonances. In screen media contexts the body of the character (fictional), the figure that character is based on (the real person, if applicable), and that of the actor overlap and are at once the same and different: a palimpsest. In addition to the ways in which the actor's body can be augmented for the role by internal and external bodily disciplines as well as costumes, makeup, and the posture, movement, vocal timbre and accent that their inhabiting of the role entails, it is also further differentiated by the way in which their form is framed and shot to emphasise specific elements of their look that fit the character. For example, although both actors appear in 'Red Riding' and *See No Evil*, in addition to different hair, costumes, etc., the attributes of Maxine Peake and Sean Harris's bodies that each text chooses to emphasise or display differ because of the differences between the *characters* portrayed.

The 2006 two-part drama *See No Evil*, written by Neil McKay, was produced to mark the 40th anniversary of the start of Hindley and Brady's trial.⁹ It employs archness, irony,

⁹ Hereafter referred to in the body of the text as *Evil* for brevity. The trial was held over 14 days, beginning on 19 April 1966, in front of Mr Justice Fenton Atkinson. Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Hindley, Myra (1942–2002)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/77394>] [ACCESSED 12/07/15].

lyricism, and references to genres such as the British New Wave, 'kitchen sink' drama, pop music and the soap opera to create a milieu of a working-class 1960s quotidian constructed around and through such cultural artefacts.¹⁰ *Evil* foregrounds history as culturally constructed, not merely in that history itself is made within a cultural context, but also that the events that go on to become history are themselves constructed *from* and *in reference to* cultural artefacts.

Screen true-crime representations typically focalise the narrative around another character than the killer (usually their family, the judiciary, police or mental health workers; the people who form, involuntarily, part of the regulatory system enclosing the individual). Another dominant approach is a documentary 'intelligence gathering' 'collage' effect. Each version of this strategy requires the creating of a corpus of material – either personal or textual – around the productive lacuna (the displayed concealment) of the murderous figure. This foregrounding allows both familiarity and a sense of reputable authenticity. Additionally, establishing a hierarchy of knowledge between viewer and characters creates dramatic or humorous irony for an audience already aware of the case history. In *Evil*, this effect is harnessed through double meanings of otherwise innocent phrases, delivered in a faux-casual way by Ian or Myra or unwittingly by other characters:

'You never know when you might need the extra baggage capacity.'
'I think Ian's been really good for her, opened her mind up to new ideas.'
'They never found his body.' 'Who?' 'Major Glenn Miller.'
'we [...] share this house with a respectable old lady, not to mention a fucking budgie, who must no[t], under any circumstances, be encouraged to learn filth!'

Evil posits its audience as 'in on' these references, able to read both meanings at once.

The implied viewer is expected to have prior knowledge, both of this case specifically,

¹⁰ The influence of *Beyond Belief* can be felt here; it is dependent on a similar *feel* of campness and lyricism, but with the benefit of hindsight's shifting mores and additional information.

and, more broadly, of the kind of socio-temporal location it describes – the class and regionally constructed terrain of an imagined 1960s Northern Britain and the classed and gendered expectations implied thereby. In addition to this, the text assumes a familiarity with the ‘type(s)’ involved – the exceptional murderer, the monster, the lad, the tough working-class woman, the femme fatale, the romanticised rape-cultural lothario, etc. To make use of these tropes the forms of masculinity and femininity it depicts have to be intelligible as well as excessive or aberrant – to tell us what society already ‘knows’ as well as presenting its own construction. The structure of the episodes are such that the first is deceptively light-hearted, depicting youthful fun, family and friendship, and the trials of ordinary working-class life (like a soap opera) and so presenting Ian and Myra (rather than Hindley and Brady) as an (*apparently*) ordinary, fun loving couple with friends and family like anyone else – only to undercut this in the second episode which confronts the narrative of the first with the return of its own repressed.



Left: Myra Hindley at home at Wardle Brook Avenue; Right: Maxine Peake in Evil



Maxine Peake (top left); clockwise from top centre: news media uses of Hindley and Brady's personal photographs.



*Left: Image of Myra Hindley from Hindley and Brady's personal collection, showing Hindley and their dog Puppet on Saddleworth Moor, allegedly standing over a grave.¹¹ Right: The exact recreation of this image in *Evil*.*

This direct re-creation of the image of Hindley looking at the ground is dramatised, re-enacting the circumstances around its progression from personal photography, to forensic material, to evidential exhibit, to media image. Attention is drawn to it as

¹¹ 'Chilling Unseen Pictures of Moors Murderer Myra Hindley', *The Mirror*, 1 July 2009.

evidence: the fictional Inspector Mounsey specifically questions Brady about it in particular (as well as other images we have not seen re-enacted), asking why in the photograph Hindley appears to be looking at something, 'is the something special about that piece of ground? Is it because it's a grave?' Brady, sprawling in his chair replies with smug superiority, slowly and sarcastically 'I suppose I must have just been . . . attracted to the composition.'



These representations rely on audience knowledge and intertextual references to well-known photographs of these criminals that have been reproduced by news media and true crime, along with broadly contemporaneous props and costumes for the temporosocial milieu. As well as recreating tableaux directly from these media images (see above), these texts also re-enact what must have been behind the camera and out of shot at the moments when these artefacts in their myth were created: i.e. when the pictures were taken.



In scenes following their arrest we are shown Hindley's famous custodial picture being taken (and their activities that day in the outfits later frozen into history), and also their (fictional) mugshots in their media context, in the papers:¹²

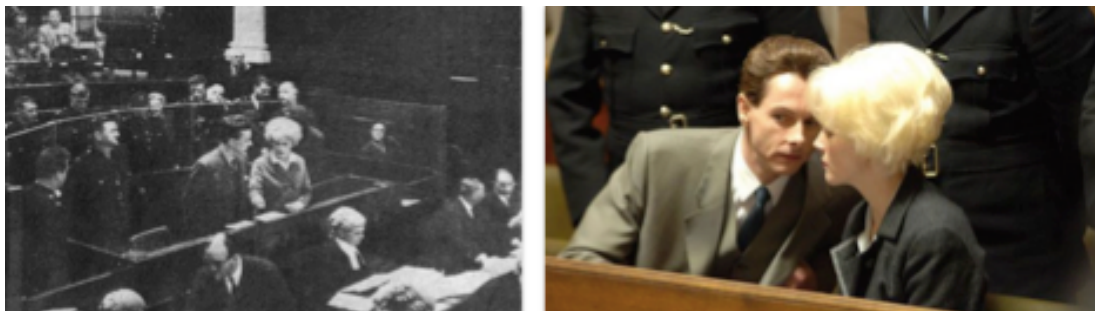


¹² As I will discuss further later in this chapter. Peake and Harris's images in the programme's replica custodial photographs were also replicated in a real-life newspaper: 'The first glimpse of TV faces of evil' *Manchester Evening News*, May 14, 2006.



Above: comparison of Evil's mocked-up mugshots with the genuine custodial images.

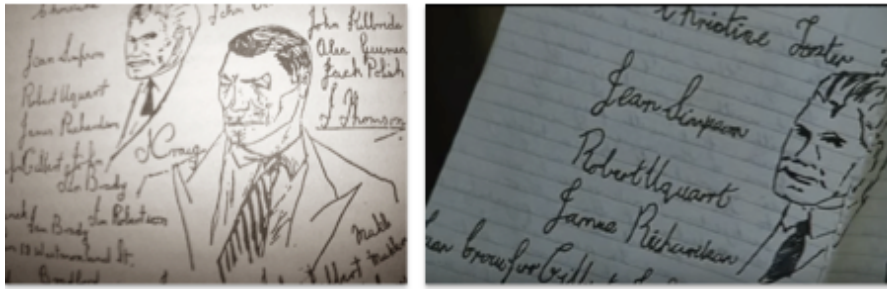
The court scene (below right) replicates (in closer framed form) pictures taken through a window, allegedly illegally by a French reporter for *Paris Match* (left):¹³



These images are predominantly a *media* intertext rather than a forensic one – or rather a media intertext drawn from forensic sources and providing an apparently forensic sense of authenticity and immediacy – for example, the direct and accurate recreation of Brady's notebooks.¹⁴

¹³ Lee, p.270.

¹⁴ The fidelity of the mise-en-scène to media and evidential sources of the case is part of the proliferation process, accumulating and solidifying the myth as a brand. In this context it is odd despite the visual



Left: Image of Brady's original notebook, Right: the prop notebook in *Evil*

Deborah Jermyn uses Urricho and Pearson's concept of 'intertextual evidence', positing cultural artefact as 'evidence', as a means of interrogating the ways in which we as cultural commentators discuss criminal media.¹⁵ Jermyn argues 'such evidence must be approached with a consciousness of the fact that it is shaped by its own institutional and media contexts and an awareness of the influence of one's own research objectives.' Her observation seems particularly relevant to my analysis of screen representations of twentieth-century killers, dealing so directly as it does with cultural artefacts both *of* and *as* evidence. Following Hartley she reminds us 'what [... an image's] status is determines how their textual and social politics will be understood and conducted, but their status is not self-evident. On the contrary, it is a product of the way they are looked at.'¹⁶ Everything becomes potential evidence: evidence is a form of attention – produced by an evidential gaze – not an innate quality of the object gazed upon. This is a vital point for true crime in all forms: the objects presented as grisly spectacles are, themselves, of no importance; it is our reading of them *as* evidence that gives them their aura and significance. Otherwise, as Brady replies, resisting Mounsey's reading of the images of himself and Hindley on the moor, they are 'just pictures'.

primacy of Hindley's mugshot over Brady's in the public consciousness Mike O'Neill, the costume designer on *Evil*, has copied Brady's mugshot outfit exactly, while Hindley's is a vague and not obviously 'of it's time' approximation, despite hers usually being the more visually fetishised and painstakingly-rendered look.

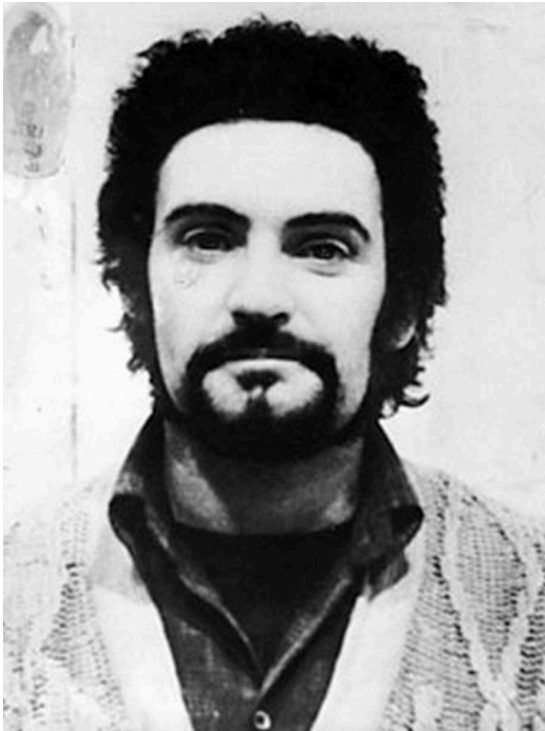
¹⁵ William Urricho and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton: PUP, 1993), p.4. Indeed we may see the use of examples to justify an argument in academic writing thus too. Jermyn, p.7-9.

¹⁶ John Hartley, *The Politics of Pictures: The Creation of the Public in the Age of the Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.30; Jermyn, p.9.



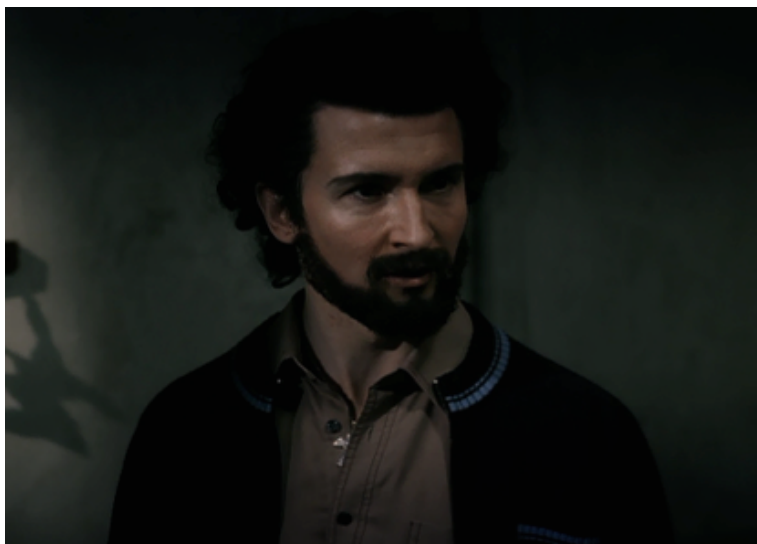
Above: Joseph Mawle as 'Peter' in 1980;

Below left: Sutcliffe's custodial photograph; Below right, a personal photograph circulated widely by the press.



As the images above demonstrate, despite being *not* a true-crime serial,¹⁷ Joseph Mawle's character has been costumed, coiffed and lit in such a way as to directly imitate Sutcliffe's mugshot. Likewise, in *Portrait* Walt Kissack's face has been altered with cosmetics to maximise his resemblance to Sutcliffe:

¹⁷ Indeed 'Red Riding's version of Sutcliffe is never called 'Sutcliffe' and only known as 'Peter' or 'The Ripper', and his wife is named 'Monica', rather than Sonia.



Actor Intertext

The body in space manifests itself onscreen by the conjunction of three mise-en-scène elements: costumes, actors, and immediate location. In terms of the actors as avatar of the historical figure, casting in itself is a big part of this (both in terms of actors' physical appearance, skills and techniques). In the case of Harris and Peake, their career trajectories fed into the roles of Brady and Hindley: by 2005 she was known as the 'One of Your Own' type Northerner next door, but also for characters with a certain excess and a queerness.¹⁸ Harris has long played working-class sinister villains. Added to this composite person is basic physical resemblance and the limited range of roles typically given to working-class actors.¹⁹ Peake's then most famous programme, *Shameless*, references the Moors Murders mugshots in an episode in which her character Veronica and her husband Kev (Dean Lennox Kelly) attempt to smuggle a child into the UK to become parents.²⁰

¹⁸ Het Phillips, "A Woman Like That Is Not A Woman, Quite. I Have Been Her Kind": Maxine Peake and the Gothic Excess of Northern Femininity', in the forthcoming *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain*, ed. David Forrest and Beth Johnson (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁹ *Arbogast On Film*.

²⁰ *Shameless*, dir. Paul Abbott (Channel 4, 2004-13), Season 4, Episode 1, 9 January 2007. The specific placing of Peake in a Hindley-esque appearance may have impacted on why she was cast in *Evil*.



Hindley and Brady's myth haunts any crime involving children, but the storyline evokes a negative stereotype that 'the poor' are reproductively feckless and excessive(ly desirous of children) whilst also visually Othering the childless couple as a perversion of the parental order.²¹ Their mugshots are shown on a television screen within the programme, framing the moment of media consumption and dissemination, like the prop newspapers showing Peake and Harris as Hindley and Brady in *Evil* and Kissack's picture in *Portrait*.²²

The Kevin Bishop Show's comedy sketch 'Gritty Bafta', pastiching *'Red Riding'*, highlights conventions that accrue to both the production and reception of such 'gritty' quality dramas likely to receive a BAFTA (British Film And Television Award) and the tendency for texts dealing with 'difficult' topics (in specific kinds of ways), to be over-represented in award success. This is alluded to in the glibly vague voiceover, 'it's the seventies, someone's in care, probably, there's a prostitute, almost definitely [...] coming soon to

²¹ A stereotype reiterated in the reportage of many recent media scandals around such crimes – e.g. the Philpott case, the 'Little Stars' nursery abuse, 'Baby P', Shannon Matthews, the moral panic in which a blonde Roma child was wrongly publicised by the media as having been kidnapped, and doubtless many more.

²² As I shall discuss further below.

channel 4, and all award ceremonies'. The generic vagueness of the pitch combined with the use of a nonsense filler phrase (all dialogue is replaced with the phrase 'gritty bafta'), emphasises genre. The lack of verbal content heightens focus on visual, spatial and sound elements, the actor's physical performance, body and intertextual persona. Indeed, the associations accruing to the kinds of actors one might expect to see in these 'gritty' productions are also pastiched as fundamental to the genre itself. The star personas represented here are united by their status as high-level British character actors, but low-level celebrities ('Samantha Morton, Sean Bean, David Thewlis, and other people you've sort of heard of'). This renders their connection less of a 'star system' of Richard Dyer's conception, more an 'actor intertext', as Bethan Jones proposes. She identifies this as the way actors' previous roles affect media and fan understandings of later roles.²³ These actors, all Northerners, all habitually work on productions that are both 'gritty' and received critical acclaim (e.g. Morton famously played Hindley in award-winner *Longford*). In *The Guardian*'s 'Pop Culture 2009' list, just before mentioning the 'Gritty Bafta' pastiche alongside its source material 'Red Riding', *the latter* was described as having 'an all-star lineup of maximum grit. Paddy Considine. Maxine Peake. Sean Bean: even the actors' names sound like something you'd see written on a long-haul truck.'²⁴ Likewise, Justin Quirk, in '*Northern Exposure*', his review of '*Red Riding*', lists some of the cast in a throwaway fashion, 'Lesley Sharp, David Morrissey and Maxine Peake also crop up, chinking tumblers of whisky and crying, "To the north – where we do what we want!"'²⁵ In fact only one of these actors (significantly, the only male one) is shown doing this. Such generalisations have a cumulative effect,

²³ Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London, British Film Institute, 1979), p.14; Bethan Jones, 'On Actor Intertextuality and Fan Decodings', *Bethan V Jones* (2015). [<https://bethanvjones.wordpress.com/2015/12/31/on-actor-intertextuality-and-fan-decodings/>] [Accessed 02/01/2016].

²⁴ Will Dean, Malik Meer and Richard Vine, 'Pop culture 2009: The year in lists – The ten best television moments of the year', *The Guardian*, 19 December 2009.

²⁵ Justin Quirk, 'Northern Exposure', *The Guardian*, 28 February 2009.

implying that the Northern-ness of these actors is of primary importance (in a review whose title foregrounds this) over their specificity, and that they are general, interchangeable, replaceable.

In an interview for *Digital Spy*, Peake talks about the personal connection between her and Harris and the fact that he helped her to get the 'Red Riding' role:

I auditioned for the part and they said, 'No thanks' and I was really gutted about it. I'm good friends with Sean [Harris] and he got the part and kept saying it was going to be great and I said to him, 'Can you stop talking about it, please?' [...] Sean went in to the office and said, 'Maxine's sister is a police woman, and she's from Manchester - stop messing about!' I got a phone call later asking me to do it!²⁶

Harris's foregrounding of Peake's Manchester origins (he is from Bethnal Green via Norfolk) suggests an implicit belief in inherent Northern regional authenticity (perhaps only as perceived by outsiders) that could provide the project with 'realness': that she would on some level not be acting.²⁷

Performance

Actor intertext provides an underlying level of meaning, an unconscious cultural paratext. Performance, however, is the text of how an actor interprets and embodies a role. Yet in these texts the killer is also a performer, embodying a role of exceptional yet ordinary otherness, transforming those around them into the materials of their art. The narrative of *Longford* is focalised predominantly through the eponymous Labour Party peer, prison visitor and penal reformer Frank Pakenham (7th Earl of Longford, known as 'Lord Longford') – played by Jim Broadbent – depicting his acquaintance with Myra

²⁶ Dan French, 'Maxine Peake ('Red Riding')', *Digital Spy*, 9 March 2009. [<http://www.digitalspy.com/tv/interviews/a148843/maxine-peake-red-riding/>] [ACCESSED 31/10/2016]

²⁷ Both on the part of Harris and, implicitly, the production team, as his appeal on those grounds apparently succeeded.

Hindley (Samantha Morton), and his campaign to arrange her parole. The film also shows Longford meeting Ian Brady (Andy Serkis). The three scenes in which Serkis plays Brady are structurally spread evenly throughout the film, suggesting his importance behind the scenes, manipulating events unseen and providing a narrative structural arc.

The plot is as follows: Longford meets Hindley as a prison visitor, and, casually suggesting she might be eligible for parole one day, completely changes her attitude towards her imprisonment. She immediately claims to sever all ties with Brady and re-converts to Catholicism, to which Longford is a fervent adherent. He discusses matters of faith with her, and her 'full' confession to a priest cements Longford's belief in her honesty. This is then undermined by Brady, who, apparently annoyed by Hindley's relationship with Longford and his efforts to secure her parole, reveals to the journalist Fred Harrison (in 1985) to having killed Keith Bennett and Pauline Reade (with Hindley) – crimes they had previously denied – whose bodies had never been found, and, for whose murders Hindley and Brady had not been tried. This forces Hindley to admit to this too, further damaging her public image and Longford's, who has made many representations in the press that her repentance is sincere. Hindley admits her deception to Longford but indicates that she no longer needs his services and that his campaigning is no longer something she sees positively. He stops communicating with her and turns instead to campaigning against pornography, facing ridicule and criticism for this as well as for his advocacy of Hindley. Years pass and Hindley, anticipating her approaching death, writes to Longford and he, elderly and also near death, visits her; the film ends with them reunited in a more honest relationship.

Thematically the film centres around faith, deception, forgiveness, and who a person 'really is', the desire for but impossibility of a fixed identity, and how this impacts on our understanding of a 'real' criminal subject inside a notorious celebrity image. Brady's appearances are brief, yet Serkis provides a concentrated intensity and energy. Portrayed inhabiting several extremes at once and yet remaining an elusive, unimpressive whole, Brady's interactions (with Longford and Harrison) both exhibit and interrogate themes of competition, performance, pedagogy, sexuality and gender, the body, physical appearance, and class. He is shown meeting individual visitors in a blank room, with silent guards some distance away or outside. On the one hand, there is no-one present to 'play off' against (as we are shown him doing in *Evil*), and our view of him is entirely external (unlike *Beyond Belief*), yet on the other, the blankness of the setting magnifies his presence and renders it more vivid. He is both surprisingly unremarkable – an ordinary man in ordinary clothes sitting still, enacting no spectacle with his physical or performative embodiment – yet nevertheless dominates the space and discussions. His conversations are really monologues, and he seems often to be elsewhere in his mind, rendering the other character peripheral, vestigial. His voice is expressive and his emotional presentation volatile, shifting rapidly from bleak to spiteful to gleefully camp, with over-the-top, even grotesque facial expressions. His predominant mode is that of sarcastically playing a variety of roles:

Brady: [fawning pious voice] 'I'd like to find my way back to God, Lord Longford, will you help me?'

Longford: 'Why certainly if that's –'

Brady: 'Don't you fucking dare. You start with that pious mumbo jumbo and I will jump across this table and bite out your tongue.'²⁸

²⁸ This would seem an intertextual reference to Hannibal Lecter. It is also interesting to note that in 2010 Anthony Hopkins (who played Lecter in the *Silence of the Lambs*) was rumoured to be about to play Ian Brady in a film of *Searching For Daddy* based on the book by journalist Christine Hart, who at the time believed Brady was her father. 'Sir Anthony Hopkins to play Ian Brady in Moors murders movie', *Daily Mirror*, 3 January 2010.

At different points he pantomimes hospitality, shock, disapproval, gossipiness, cycling rapidly between them and dropping each suddenly. His disingenuous adoption of different registers and tones is reminiscent of Harris performing Brady sarcastically itemising Scottish tropes: 'not a loch or a bank or a bonny brae'.²⁹

Longford's Brady also displays the same kind of arch, glib self-referentiality shown in *Evil*, and the same kind of urge to make other people hear about his crimes, remarking, for example, that Myra was 'strong; that came in handy, as you can imagine, when they were wriggling and trying to get away'.) Ultimately his sincerity is indistinguishable from subterfuge, but his sense of superiority and largely jovial hostility remain constant. The Brady of *Longford*, however, is tired; his capering before a captive audience lacks the pleasure that *Beyond Belief* and *Evil* display in him. As is fitting for an incarcerated murderer rather than one still at liberty, still at 'work', as it were, something of 'the fire' (as his *Evil* incarnation put it) is missing. There is a weariness, an impatience, a futility, about him. Having left the imaginary Brady in *Evil* at the trial and his custodial photograph – his entry into immortality – here, returning, we see him in prison, somewhat worn down, no longer able to direct others and position them to his will. The two texts form a continuous fabric, and present something often unseen, until recently: not the Brady of the moors, striding into the wind, looking down on the world as tiny and unimportant, like a bleakly landscaped Harry Lime atop his rocky equivalent of a ferris wheel, not the Gothic New Wave Brady of the 'grimy backstreets' of a grittily rebooted Coronation Street, not the spectre of myth, but a small, ill, limited, contained

²⁹ And *Evil's* more general theme of performing for/to others. This also raises an interesting comparison; unlike *Beyond Belief* and *Evil*, in *Longford* Brady does not use any obvious dialect signifiers ('hasnae', 'no' as a contraction of 'not', 'lassie', 'youse', etc.) and yet appears more authentically Scottish, despite (or rather in fact perhaps because of) this lack of regional realism nodes.

man, attempting to project fictions of his own making upon the blank walls of a bare prison room.

At the time of writing, Brady is in Ashworth psychiatric hospital, in precarious mental and physical health, waiting for his own death by natural or legal means. In recent years Brady has been the subject of, and catalyst for, a similar resurgence of attention and representation.³⁰ In the summer of 2012 his increasing ill-health and his recent mental health tribunal in which he sought to return to prison with a view to ending his own life by hunger strike (which he was then unable to attend due to a seizure) gained him renewed media attention. This coincided with the publication in May 2012 of Rafferty's *Myra, Beyond Saddleworth*, a fictional afterlife of Hindley, which its author claimed resulted from her correspondence with Brady.³¹ In February 2013 events accelerated following the discovery of a letter to Brady's advocate (intended to be read after his death if the tribunal had allowed him to end his life) which may or may not have revealed the location of Keith Bennett's body, followed by the subsequent arrest of this advocate and the death of Bennett's mother just days later, with the contents of the letter still unknown, have all contributed to a sharp rise in both news and documentary media representations of Brady. Three documentaries were broadcast about him in the same month, the last of which was instrumental in creating the scandal surrounding his mental health advocate's safeguarding his letters. These re-eruptions of fascination surrounding the case demonstrate the interconnection of representations of Brady with real-life developments in the case. *Longford* is part, then, of an ongoing cultural

³⁰ Representations of Hindley and her crimes have been shaped by media responses to events in her life since – the trial (1966); her parole attempts; home secretaries' responses to her case, Michael Heseltine's introduction of the whole-life tariff (1983); evidence emerging leading to a media stand-off with partner Ian Brady (1987) – and her death (2002).

³¹ Deborah Orr, 'Myra Hindley: a new chapter: Jean Rafferty tells Deborah Orr why she was compelled to write a novel based on the imagined release of Myra Hindley', *The Guardian*, 19 June 2012.

reassessment of Brady's myth following the death of Hindley and developments in Brady's own situation.

Thus, *Longford's* Brady – while forming part of the mythological Brady canon – complicates that myth, moving it on towards another phase of his cultural meaning. No longer the 1960s Heathcliff but, rather, the temporally-frozen, living spectre of death-in-life, a withered *memento mori*, the embodied return of the repressed of society's not knowing what to do with him: its ambivalence towards the death penalty, its desire to 'lock em up and throw away the key', the need to both forget him and yet keep him close. This Brady is the one we are now more familiar with from recent documentaries such as *Ian Brady the Right to Die* (2009) and *Ian Brady: Endgames of a Psychopath* (2012), aired during his unsuccessful mental health tribunal, and from newspapers' use of court drawings of this tribunal and mocked-up, falsely 'aged' pictures photoshopped from his mugshot – again demonstrating a desire that, even as he is shown to age, he should remain fixed, contained, retaining his mystique, his visual brand.

The film likewise (even more so) plays with Hindley's myth. On Longford's first visit to her he is shown mistaking another woman for her from behind because of her white-blond bouffant; he is unable to recognise Hindley without her 'trademark' mugshot hairdo. He remarks 'what a pretty smile you have [...] your entire appearance and demeanour is quite different from what I expected because of course all I had to go on was that police photograph', to which Hindley responds by calling it 'the Medusa'. Aside from the patronising sexism involved in this exchange it also foreshadows a theme throughout the film of appearances and expectations, of acting and presenting a facade. Later Brady says to Longford that Hindley is 'an hysteric', and as such

gives to people, reflects back to them, that which they [hysterics] believe makes them most acceptable, what they think others want to see [... which is why] to you she's a virtuous church-going angel, to her co-prisoners and dykes, a strong woman with a soft heart, and to me she was a brutal sadist and a cruel killer.

Performance is foregrounded as a central facet of how we inscribe, construct, assign and recognise identity, in ourselves or others. Brady's characterisation of Hindley as playing a different part or reflecting back a different projection to different people of what they want her to be positions her in the same light as the emblematic blank of her mugshot, an image so fixed yet whose meaning is so fluid and limitlessly projectable-onto, detachable and deployable, and that now 'is' her as far as the world is concerned. We may ask why Brady says that (or rather, why the text has him do so). As well as advancing the plot and providing viewers and Longford with information about Hindley they would otherwise not be privy to, it also conveys a key facet of his (imagined) character: the need to shape the narrative, to control, to manipulate, to stage-manage how people perceive one another and their own situations.

The themes of appearance, projected persona and reputation are foregrounded from the start of Brady's initial meeting with Longford; and earlier by Longford's mistaking another woman for Hindley because of 'the hair'.³² Brady greets him with a slow, faux-gregarious 'Lord Longford! It's wonderful, isn't it, when people look exactly as you imagine.'

He goes on to add:

³² I'm reminded of Hebdige's quotation from Andy Warhol in his account of the Krays' fame: 'you either become what you look like or you don't become at all.' People who are not easily readable or deployable, then, do not become famous. Yet there must be something that frustrates our reading in order to compulsively return to it the way we have with Hindley and Brady. As Dyer proposes, the star must be both ordinary and extraordinary, present and absent. Dyer, 1979. Dick Hebdige, 'The Kray Twins: A study of a system of closure', *CCCS Selected Working Papers Vol. 1*, Ed. Ann Gray, Jan Campbell, Mark Erickson, Stuart Hanson and Helen Wood (Oxford: Routledge, 2007) p.782.

So this is my competition then? This is who I'm up against? Myra's new boyfriend. She certainly picks them, doesn't she?

Raising the issue of masculine competition over women in the opening moments of his appearance suggests that this is a key strand in the representational tradition of depicting Brady.

This prison visit is for your benefit not mine. I want to tell you about Myra, who you no doubt believe is sincere in her religious conversion. [sigh]. Let me tell you that woman cares no more about god than she cares about the piles in my arse. What she cares about is getting out, and she thinks you'll help her. But the minute your back is turned [begins to lift out envelope from under the table] she mocks you, for your silly hair and your clothes and [said as if reading from a letter] your self-important autobiographies only published because his family owns a bloody publishing house. [looks up, smiles briefly, mock-incredulity] What? She didn't tell you she was still writing to me?

Oh dear. [mock-opprobrium] She probably didn't tell you she was fucking that little prison officer as well. The nun.' [mannered tone of voice, as if shocked, gossipy tone; hands letter towards Longford but then takes it back] 'They do it under the bed in her cell apparently. [rifling through pages; whispers] 'Four times a day.'

This part is performed with a gleeful, mock-disapproving pantomime of telling tales. As the monologue progresses Brady screws up his face theatrically when referring to sexual or transgressive matters – giving an impression of childish spite – speaking in a laboured way that conveys a sensual drawing out of words, and looking into the middle-distance wistfully at times – it seems that he is speaking for himself, for his own enjoyment, as well as manipulating Longford and aiming to disadvantage Myra.

She's a very high sex drive, our Myra. It's the sort of detail you might want about your new girlfriend. She needs it all the time. Like a man in that way. Like a man in other ways too. Strong. That came in handy, as you can imagine. When they were wriggling and trying to get away.

[Longford goes to get up, upset] 'Wait, you can't go I haven't finished with you. Take my advice, [...] Stay clear of Myra, because she will destroy you. Certainly destroyed me.

[laughs] There's a thought you've not had before. That Myra egged me on. That without her none of it would have happened.

[Longford gets up]

Wait. [shouts] You're not yet dismissed! [faced screwed up like a parody of rage] Listen to the tape, that's my advice, if you want to know what she's really like. And when you do listen, bear this in mind: it was her that insisted they call us

“mummy!” and “daddy!” [mocking impression of a child crying out, long drawn out]. Not me.

In a subsequent visit he calls Longford ‘Myra Hindley’s whipping boy’ and warns him again: ‘Leave. Myra. Hindley. Alone. Or she will do to you what she did to me: she will destroy you.’ Again Brady attempts to reframe the narrative, to control others’ reading of their own situation. Again his manipulation is couched in terms, however disingenuous and sarcastic, of sparing Longford trouble and warning him of Hindley’s deceit: a false alliance but an alliance no less, invoking the kind of ‘advice to another man about a woman or women in general’ trope that recurs in all these texts, in which homosocial bonding is achieved through heteropatriarchal pedagogy.³³ *Evil’s* Ian telling Dave how to manipulate women is now the older, more defeated Brady of *Longford* telling tales on Myra to the eponymous lord (presented by the film as on some level attracted to and/or fond of Hindley) to expose her deception and undermine his affection for her. It resembles a ‘bros before hoes’ male-bonding exercise, despite their obvious non-friendship.

We see in Longford and Brady’s encounter a skewed twist on the classic form of competition between men over the romantic/sexual ownership of a woman that bypasses the woman altogether. Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick theorised male homosociality as (not necessarily sexual) same-sex attraction operating in an increasingly paranoid atmosphere in the West from the nineteenth century where gestures of intimacy became coded as sexual and all male-male interaction subject to homophobic suspicion and persecution.³⁴ Sedgwick later reiterated her point, drawing on the work of René Girard, that ‘male-male desire became widely intelligible primarily by being routed through

³³ As I will discuss in the following section.

³⁴ Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, *Between Men* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), p.2.

triangular relations involving women', in which two men, apparently competing over the love of a woman, disguise their mutual attraction through rivalry within this love triangle.³⁵ Brady's cat-and-mouse toying with Longford, then, is a muted echo of his power-charged games with Dave in *Evil*; in reduced circumstances, the Brady of *Longford* must take what he can get. Such interactions also, however, forge a bond between the two men as well as expressing desire. As Merl Storr elucidates, Sedgwick's homosociality posits a 'male bonding [shaped in] a characteristic triangular structure [inside which] men have intense but nonsexual bonds with other men, and women serve as the conduits through which those bonds are expressed.'³⁶ This is an example of triangulation's 'trade in women' as the currency of male homosociality, not purely in a (pseudo)romantic exchange, but also through men bonding over insulting and deploying women as a means of disavowing their own femininity. Girard's original use of triangulation more specifically foregrounds the scapegoating effects than does Sedgwick, proposing male conflict is resolved through containment by displacement onto an arbitrary scapegoat. Examples of such scapegoating abound in these texts: for instance, *Portrait* depicts Peter and his friend bonding through crudely discussing sex workers, or the performative misogyny Smith, Burn, Wagg, and Ward Jouve describe as the minimal condition of acceptance into Sutcliffe's 1970s Yorkshire masculine milieu.

³⁵ Ibid, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: California UP, 1990), p.15; René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy* (Oxford: Oxford, 1991) p. 259; p. 44.

³⁶ Merl Storr, *Latex and Lingerie: Shopping for Pleasure at Ann Summers Parties* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), pp. 39-40.

Homosociality and Masculine Pedagogy

‘I can see you doing anything, you just want educating’
– Ian to Dave, *Evil*.

The scene in *Evil* in which Ian and Dave put together the sofa bed to sleep on in the lounge is part of a backdrop of homoeroticism throughout, and the dialogue (of disavowal) in this scene merely brings this theme to the surface. Dave’s playful question, ‘How do I know you’re not queer?’ is delivered in a flirtatiously offhand manner, while Ian’s response, ‘cause I can think of better ways to get my kicks than up another man’s arse’ (the chilling and offensive implications of ‘better ways’ of course left unglossed) is spoken whilst bending over, the words partially grunted, with the vocal style one of strain or exertion. The characters are posed and lines voiced in such a manner that while the scene has an entirely logical ‘excuse’ for this (putting together a sofa bed *does* require exertion and bending over), the performance invokes echoes of a sexual scene whilst simultaneously explaining and refuting such implications. This is another example of the ‘conceal and display’ bait and switch true-crime genres are so keen on; it is able to archly play with two simultaneous ‘meanings’, invoking the implications of same-sex desire within this story and the sexual experiences of taboo figures such as rapists, child-abusers and murderers in the same instant as denying them. They are explicitly brought up to be refuted – and indeed the way in which the characters do so is treated as a (fraudulent yet emphasised) badge of or ticket to acceptable masculinity, in turn purely created to foreshadow the criminal/deviant sexuality beneath this façade. Rather than sharing a bed without comment and simply sleeping, they must have a power-charged, archly ironic (‘better ways’ indeed) conversation about how they definitely don’t want to sleep with one another. Thus the scene relies on dangling the muted echo of – and impossibility of showing outright– the killer’s erotic power play

with his tortured victims while simultaneously foregrounding the impossibility, the extremity, of such a depiction. This relates to Slee's contention, discussed in Chapter One, that in 1930s to 1960s American films, rape scenes were used to stand in for sex scenes: 'consensual sex was forbidden, but uninvited sex, which according to Hollywood's Hays Code could never be attractive to audiences, was one way of showing sex[ual activity] within code legislation.'³⁷

These strategic Hollywood evasions helped set and solidify the conventions for future representations of (for whatever reason) representable portions of a screen narrative that can only be alluded to (i.e. it helped set *how* allusions can work). Like true crime's bait and switch, this technique inadvertently goes in both directions. In the case of screen representations of crime, it functions in reverse, so that consensual sex acts as a stand-in for rape. True crime tries to (but of course cannot, unproblematically) present a quasi-nonconsensual grey area of power-charged implicit sexual tension, displaying a tendency to try and deniably conflate its way away from directly presenting either sex (in the case of these murderers) or abuse. Here an eroticised same sex encounter revolving around power inequality is able to function as a palatable stand in for a horrifying crime, teasing the edges of its own lacuna.

Ian and Dave are presented enacting a homoerotic tension throughout, both at the surface level and subtextually. This alludes to (and indeed amounts to) the (apparently factual) suggestion that the real Brady may have been attracted to Smith. More importantly, however, on a narrative level it complicates and 'explains', in more titillating terms than the other possibilities, why Hindley and Brady tried to include

³⁷ Slee, p.38.

Smith in their crimes. The kind of obvious gun/phallus trope that is a commonplace of 'bad guy' genre works is readily available in Brady's use of a gun in his interactions with Dave to both further and display his power over him in a sexualised way. On the moor, when he insults Dave to get a rise out of him and then bends close to him in a way that the shot constructs as visually akin to the approach of a romantic clinch (the position of the two actors in relation to one another and within the frame, and the camera angle all emphasise this effect) he points the gun towards Dave's face in a faint stroking motion and tells him 'I can see you doing anything, you just want educating'. Later in the lounge he forces a form of Russian Roulette on Dave, standing over him with the gun levelled at his face from above, while Dave gasps for breath out of fear, and Ian demands 'Now look down the barrel. I said look down the fucking barrel' before pulling the trigger. Dave's response of fear and relief again parallels an erotic response, and the positioning of the actors and props has elements of a hyperbolically pantomimed fellatio adding to the programme's continued arch echoing effects whereby it is constantly drawing attention to what it *isn't* – cannot be – showing you. It enables the text to characterise Brady as a sexual predator without displaying any actual sexual material, either consensual or abusive, either of him or of children.

This is a feature we saw in Chapter One in Williams's depiction of Brady's teenage masturbation, presented as an imagined subjugation of himself – the split Brady of predator and teenage sex-fodder, sexual agent and sexualised child in one. The casting of Maureen and David is relevant here, because the 'real life' David Smith and Brady were 16 and 26 when they met.³⁸ Again, as with their (quasi) flirtatious exchange over

³⁸ In contrast, Matthew McNulty was 24 when he played Smith and Harris, playing Brady, was 40. At 16 in the early '60s a working-class man would often have left school, got married, had a child. Despite being the era that invented the teenagers, it was also a time when someone of that age would have been considered

sleeping arrangements, this allows a sort of substitute sexual exchange of domination and submission to take place, whilst at the same time conspicuously an actual sexual exchange *does not* take place, and thus remains on a symbolic level. The implication that the three of them are in a love triangle complicates and inverts the triangulation of Sedgwick and Girard's theories, and while the uniting object of desire is no longer female and no longer matches up, there remains the explicitly gendered allegiance of two males in relation to one woman. Myra and Ian are presented as far more equal - but *only* in relation to Dave. We see this tension of the two conflicting allegiances elegantly and economically summed up in the rest of the 'look down the barrel' scene. Once Dave recovers from his fear he develops a cocky condescension towards Myra, like a lackey to Ian's more direct control, that Myra returns with a hard and equal stare, despite Ian whistling for her like a dog and giving her direct orders. Visually Myra and Ian are level, while Dave lounges, perhaps with relief, on the sofa at a lower height. Although Ian is displaying his power over Myra in front of Dave like a set piece for his benefit (the theatricality of which is emphasised by Myra having been waiting on the stairs to make her entrance the entire time, as though waiting in the wings in a play) – he and Myra are performing *to others for* each other. When Dave tries to join in his crude boyish arguing is met by her initially sarcastically friendly, then vicious 'How do you know? What do you know about women? What do you know about bloody anything Dave Smith?'

The framing, the heights that people are presented at, and the symmetries and asymmetries emphasise this – and lead up to Ian again displaying his self-perceived masculine mastery over women as a class (again for Dave's benefit, parsing their exchange for him, to smooth over Myra's direct challenge). As before he is giving Dave

in a lot of ways to be a grown man, so, perhaps their ages being pushed up is indicative of this older-seeming role.

his lessons, 'they're all that type of girl', and "'murder is a supreme pleasure" you understand that aye?', so again Ian exercises homosocial pedagogy; he 'educates' Dave: 'Women have to feel you need them. But you must never show them that you do.'³⁹ The gaze fields of who looks at whom and which portions of the shot are in focus in scenes in which all three of these characters are alone together emphasise this set of overlapping power struggles. Complicity and performance are vital themes: what is being acted and *for whom*? Watching them performing their self-constructed power roles thus evokes a spectre of an imagined public consuming that construction – an audience for whose consumption the real-life crimes were being committed. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, *Evil* is marked by an intense self-awareness and an implied audience who is 'in on the joke'. The level of knowledge expected and encouraged of the viewer is not merely historical but also one of recognising character dynamics within the texts and within the broader mythos of these figures. The reader is required to be complicit in Ian and Myra's inter-subjectivity – attaining an extra level by making Dave complicit also – and thus the text plays on the ideas of complicity and of playing for an audience of Dave and the viewer (and to the police, later, and Myra to her sister, etc.); even the title 'See No Evil' suggests an audience – and an audience for whom things are concealed as well as displayed.

The 'all that type of girl' scene is another arch reference in the programme, foregrounding Ian and Dave's growing closeness but also alluding to the layers of knowledge from which Dave is excluded but that Ian and the viewer are inside. Looking up at the window of the bedroom belonging to Pauline Reade, one of their first victims,

³⁹ In addition to literally setting Dave what he, disturbingly in context of his crimes against children, calls 'homework' (for e.g. reading the Marquis de Sade).

and seeing her mother looking out, Ian asks Dave: 'Would that be that Mrs Reade, lady whose daughter disappeared? You must've known that lassie well.'

Their conversation continues:

Dave: '[...] Police say she met some lad and ran off.'

Ian: 'But youse dinnae believe that eh?'

Dave: 'She weren't that type of girl'

Ian: 'Yeah right. They're *all* that "type" of girl.'

In the same way that he makes reference to their abduction of Keith Bennett ('they never found his body') and pretends he's talking about Glenn Miller (or is, but, the audience and Myra clearly read it both ways, Peake playing it as a barely-betrayed moment of shock followed by one of relief and smug knowledge). Again we have the gulf between Brady's performance and how we know it to be. Both Harris and Peake handle this repeated theme well: the knowing innocence of dropping casual hints. This conversation is conducted whilst Dave and Ian urinate side by side against the shared wall between the Smith and Reade houses – so disrespectful in context; *literally* pissing on her boundaries. Ian feigns ignorance of the case to encourage Dave to talk about it, making disrespectful remarks, before jumping on Dave's back and riding him like a horse, shouting 'giddy up', in a brief but barely-encoded display of dominance and homoeroticism, which Mrs Reade hears and looks down at sadly. Thus Brady is presented as opportunistically yet calculatedly converting real-life situations into his own vision of himself and his world, turning other people into objects and backdrops for his own imaginings.

The display of such intimate male bonding rituals is a spectacle too, because it conceals through a display, a display that in itself is engaged in strategic concealment *as* display (we never, during this myriad of examples, see any penises). This representational

thread works as both a disavowal, through misdirection, of same sex desire, and a key element of how true-crime texts show-without-showing when it comes to sexual abuse (once again, in the scene described at the head of this paragraph, the teenage Smith is placed in a position of subordinate intimacy with Brady). Again, the contrast with the presentation of Hindley is telling; we never see anything even apparently standing-in for affection or sexual attraction between Ian and Myra, indicating such a depiction is un-presentable. Perhaps there is an unwillingness to taint heterosexuality with the kind of retrospective construction of deviance so amply applied to anything remotely construable as queer in true crime.

Spectacle

These texts bodily foreground male bonding and competition. Visually and narratively self-aware, they posit an implied viewer who is in on the 'joke' and conscious of their position *as* viewer. The mannered self-construction in scenes where Brady, Hindley and Smith are alone in *Evil* implies a kind of 'implied consumer' for the murders. Combined with their construction of homosociality and triangulation this gives an indication of how in true-crime genres, as I discuss below, spectacle is as much about what is concealed as what is displayed. Indeed, that display can only function through strategic and repeated concealments. As Deborah Jermyn contends, 'fascination with the spectacle of criminal stories, with rendering criminals visible has a long history in popular culture', from the emergence of the photograph as a tool for criminal apprehension in the mid 19th Century and earlier besides.⁴⁰ As Hayward and Presdee argue,

⁴⁰ Jermyn, p.12.

Contemporary visual representations of crime, transgression and punishment take us far beyond the realm of the criminal justice system or law and order politics; even beyond established understandings of the media's role as a 'storehouse of illicit excitement' [... and] voyeuristic consumption of violence and tragedy[; ...] a highly mediated 'crime fest' [... of] visual representation of crime and punishment plays out in reality TV theatres of the absurd and mediated spectacles of punitiveness.⁴¹

This is also very similar to Seltzer's 'observing gaze', under which death is staged as theatre for the living.⁴² In its broadest sense, the term 'spectacle' refers to visual display: anything presented strikingly to view to draw the visual attention, such as pageantry or public show. As such, spectacle is key to certain genres of screen media (historical epic; musicals), as well as simply to the process of screen representation generally, reliant as it is on capturing and directing visual attention.

Spectacle is not merely display however but also concealment: the limits of the visible are prescribed by what is not shown, both in the case of real-life crimes being often not directly represented but rather refracted through or off another sight, and also in the case of what is simply not shown and thus invisibilised. This in turn splits into firstly the normatively invisible and unremarkable, that is shown but not seen (i.e. power structures; as Debord puts it, spectacle's central 'message is: "What appears is good; what is good appears"') and secondly the othered that is simply ignored rather than exoticised (i.e. people, settings and identities outside the normative focal-points of narrative) – these elements, not appearing, cannot be 'good' (natural, unquestionable, etc.).⁴³ Creating an inside-outsider dichotomy and overlap of different kinds of visibility and invisibility, this contributes to the depiction of killers as walking unseen among us, an enemy within, at once hyper-ordinary and radically other.

⁴¹ Keith Hayward and Mike Presdee, *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.3.

⁴² Seltzer, 2007, p.3.

⁴³ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (originally Paris: Editions Buchet-Chastel, 1967, this edition Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), paragraph 12.

This has both generic and temporal implications for quasi/factual screen texts. Tom

Brown defines

varieties of spectacle associated with [...] the historical film as dependant on an 'historical gaze' [which] articulates the film character's relationship to the history of which [they are] part and, as a particular performative posture and gaze, it is a literal embodiment of historical filmmaking's wider discursive and rhetorical strategies.⁴⁴

Brown examines this gaze's construction of gender, drawing on Laura Mulvey's definition of femininity as spectacle: as 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.⁴⁵ Neale also develops this, suggesting spectacle is 'a system which is especially concerned [...] to display the visibility of the visible', while Geoff King, analysing Hollywood cinema, defines it as 'the production of images at which we might wish to stop and stare'.⁴⁶ Neale's version is broader and less grandeur-specific: allowing for (and indeed promoting) the examination of intimate, minute spectacle, rather than purely wide-angle show-pieces of landscapes, crowd scenes and choreography. Staring is not always public. True crime very much relies on that sense of illicit glimpses. Mulvey foregrounds fetishistic covert looking and voyeurism, using sex work as analogy in describing the spectacle as a striptease. The themes of staging and sanctioned looking underlying this comparison are germane to *Portrait* and *Beyond Belief's* murderer masturbation tableaux (discussed in Chapter One), which display the killers staging themselves for themselves, and by extension for us. Yet beyond these particular images of sexual-stagecraft, to use

⁴⁴ Tom Brown, 'Spectacle/gender/history: the case of *Gone with the Wind*', *Screen*, 49:2 (2008), pp. 157-178.

⁴⁵ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Visual and Other Pleasures* (originally in *Screen*, 1975, this edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 14-30, p.19.

⁴⁶ Steve Neale, 'Triumph of the Will: Notes on Documentary and Spectacle', *Screen*, 20:1 (1979), p.66; Geoff King, 'Spectacle, Narrative, and the Spectacular Hollywood Blockbuster' in *Movie Blockbusters* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.114-127, p.4.

Mulvey's construction, the mode of looking constructed by true-crime turns whatever is onscreen into a striptease for the viewer.

I use the more general visual and filmic sense of 'spectacle' to mean 'display' (tracing gender and temporo-spatial implications), but with a Debordian twist that posits display as always inherently predicated on concealment (specifically concealment of capitalist social mechanisms), and that this tension between display and concealment and eliding of mechanism is vital to, and operates unusually near the surface in, true-crime texts.

While his term is often used to simply mean 'mass media', it denotes chiefly a social relation predicated on passivity and a specifically political, propagandist, technological spectacle that consistently inheres to discipline, to commodity culture, and to visual media. While Debord does not claim spectacle as concealment of violence *per se* so much as enforced passivity (restricting his discussion of violent spectacle to the concentrated spectacle of totalitarian regimes), my reading of the diffuse and integrated spectacles of mass society in modernity and late capitalism is as a system whose bombardment of commodity and images hides at its heart not only a radical nonconsent but also violence: the brutal violence of capitalism's limitless need for raw materials and resources and the lives of its inmates, and its utter disregard for either bodily or political autonomy. Just as military pageants are visual spectacles concealing the necessity of violence and death in war and splitting apart the two concepts, so too does the spectacle of crime representation isolate viewers from the reality of death and suffering. But just as Debord sees, in his film work particularly, the possibilities of the spectacle for *détournement* and for turning to use against such oppression, so too does true crime (and its related modes) offer the possibility of re-examining and dismantling moral and societal

certainties.⁴⁷ In Debord's conception, spectacle is a singularity and a mass: a miasma of apparently inevitable minutiae. This is like Dyer's conception of unmarked whiteness (see Introduction): the spectacle is everywhere and nowhere, vastly abstract and yet made from minute elements of our cultural fabric, and its invisibility is its omnipotence. This idea of both singularity and mass echoes the murderer's twin representational poles: in their spectacular construction they are mass-in-person (disseminated, proliferated, representative of a whole system and worldview) *and* exceptional (individualised, pathologised alone rather than located within the systemic).⁴⁸

As Downing demonstrates, visual and narrative constructions of murderers rely on presenting killers as exceptional. This is partly accomplished through, and partly operates alongside, the staging of (certain kinds of) bodies within (certain kinds of) spaces as Other, exotic, inferior. These elements conjoin in the depiction of the Northern killer, and contribute to the strategy of alternate display and concealment (and display *of* concealment) so central to true-crime representations of all kinds. This alternating display and concealment constitutes a spectacle projecting, distorting, creating and covering up the power relations involved in such crimes and their cultural representation. All speech operates through silence – in that all representational presence is at the expense of the absence of something else – but the speech of true crime is an open dumbshow, a pantomime of its own disavowal. This kind of 'bait and switch' sleight of hand is an integral facet of the genre and indeed the main method which allows it to operate at all on such tight margins between titillation and disgust: to

⁴⁷ Meghan Sutherland, 'What Debord can teach us about protest: The Society of the Spectacle urges us to rethink the relationship between activism, philosophy and pleasure in everyday life', *The Guardian*, 2 April 2012.

⁴⁸ See Seltzer, 1998, p.105-124 on the 'mass in person' and Downing, p.126-147 on Dennis Nilsen's self-description as the 'monochrome man' (p.134) providing an especial exemplar of exceptionality as 'rule, deviation and cultural expectation' (p.127).

spell out the specifics of rape, murder and other forms of violence without explicitly representing them and thus avoid obscenity laws, horrifying its target audience beyond enjoyment, or descending into the banality of outright gore over the always teasing, never-revealed open secret, the productive lacuna at the heart of the genre and of mainstream crime representation more generally.

In this section I use the 'Red Riding' character Bob Craven, a fictional corrupt police officer revealed as mob enforcer and rapist-murderer, to explore themes of abuse culture and the embodied Northern killer.⁴⁹ Craven is important, bodily, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, visually he has the same basic body as screen Brady, because the same actor plays them both. Extra-textual or not, irrelevant or not, there is something powerful in having one of the men tasked with finding the Ripper, with protecting people from harm, grinning the same grin from the same face as the television incarnation of that most famously inhuman of monsters, Ian Brady. Harris's actor intertext suggests this is hardly some coincidence of casting: his canon is predicated on the embodiment of *nastiness*. Furthermore, his character works alongside Peake's, so the actors' shared intertext reflects upon this re-deployment. Their selection for these roles also raises implications (particularly in Harris's case because of the two characters' similarity) for the craft of (re)constructing our assumed cultural knowledge about villains. The fact that these qualities are required (visually and as intertext) to play such characters reveals the generic and iconographic templates of both audience and real-life expectation.

⁴⁹ The screen Craven is based on the character of the same name in the original novels but differs significantly in appearance and the extent of his role, acting more of a composite of several of the books' minor characters into one more central one in the adaptation.

Craven physically exhibits callousness: inflicting savage unprovoked beatings; sitting on the edge of a trolley containing a corpse and leaning against the dead body whilst lighting a cigarette and spitting. His verbal responses also jar with the other (less corrupt or more apparently acceptable) characters around him: when asked what he recalls about the investigation into one of the victims' deaths he replies with crudely glib account of the salacious details (e.g. that the killer 'shoved a bit of wood up her fanny') rather than, say, leads that had been followed.⁵⁰ Yet the bombastically extreme form his viciousness takes seem to discount him as a serious threat, as if he distorts violent misogyny to comic levels, when, of course, there is sadly no upper limit to abuse or oppression that can truly be unbelievable and thus discounted. He and Dawson echo the odd yet jovial abuser 'hiding in plain sight' whose true face we have come to see in light of Yewtree and other such recent investigations. Jimmy Savile was quoted as saying that he constructed a persona in which people were unable to take him seriously, helping to him get away with his crimes and abuses, because people would feel 'insulted' to be frightened of him.⁵¹ Both Craven's techniques of violence as a mob enforcer and his everyday workplace interactions comprise a display of sexually-expressed aggression and lack of fellow-feeling.

Performing a type of embodied masculinity, forming both the content and limits of the kinds assigned to the male killers in these texts, Craven represents its bodily locus as spectacle, making exceptional its expression within an individual body whilst

⁵⁰ This and other disgusting remarks by Craven seem to have definite analogues in the real-life investigation. Smith recounts that when she was a reporter covering the case, the police showed 'victims [...] as much distaste [if not more] as they did the killer. A senior West Yorkshire detective, discussing eighteen-year-old Elena Rytka [...] gleefully announced: "Her fanny was as sticky as a paper-hanger's bucket" [with jarring ...] gloating disgust [...] on contemplation of the mutilated body of a dead teenage girl'. Smith, p.175-6. He linguistically turns part of her body into a tool, a storage receptacle for matter, the matter of creative or artisanal labour, a comparison clearly indicative of the reification theme evident throughout attitudes to women that undergirded the case.

⁵¹ Dan Davies, *In Plain Sight: the Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* (London: Quercus, 2015).

simultaneously rendering it general and typical *within a specific time and social milieu*, both of which conceal and contain the normalised and systemic violence and nonconsent socially embedded within capitalism. In his performance of Craven, Harris (and the director, the mise-en-scène, framing and cinematography) uses bodily positioning to demonstrate both his resistance to authority and yet also utter capitulation and replication of it within its power structures. His attitude towards the bodies of others highlights the callous reification at work in systems of control: he really makes clear that, to its agents, to those who put the boot in whether inside or outside the law, bodies are only so much *matter* – ‘minge’ and meat, ‘fanny’ or ‘wood’, men, women or children, sex or agonising death, it’s all the same.⁵²

Craven is consistently, inappropriately and irrelevantly sexual. His remarks are always out of place; like the fictionalised Peter Sutcliffe he tries to do ‘laddy banter’ but gets it wrong and makes people uncomfortable, implying again that ‘correct’ masculinity is less what you do and more what you are already perceived to be. It is as if, in mimicking these masculine behaviours without the social capital for success, these characters make the background levels of misogyny too noticeable; getting it ‘right’ relies on replication without foregrounding. This kind of paranoid implicit recognition of acceptable masculinity relates to that which Sedgwick describes in her re-formulation of ‘homosexual panic’:

Through the workings of the structure ‘It takes one to know one’ [...] habits of reading [...] and] habits of knowing, all were brought under the paranoia-propagating organization of male homosexual panic. ‘It takes one to know one,’ the one who knows and the One who is taken become, in this exemplarily Gothic little catchphrase, indistinguishable.⁵³

⁵² A very important trope in the books especially and that his character in the films brings across in a way that other textual elements often are lost.

⁵³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno, 1980), p.1.

Indeed, Craven's behaviour can be seen as representing the incoherence of homosocial desire as delimited by homosexual panic. His interactions with Dunford form a series of discrete set pieces in which this violent intimacy is reiterated (thus refuting, by violence, that intimacy). In his initial scene Craven and his work partner Tommy Douglas corner Dunford in a car park; the first lines he has in the entire film series consist of homophobic abuse immediately preceding same-sex sexual violence. Douglas and Craven form a warped comedy double act, with the punchlines literal punches and Douglas as the straight man in both senses of the word, whereas Craven, despite his homophobic remarks, seems keen to inflict specifically sexual violence upon Dunford.

Craven: 'What you doing here lad?'

Dunford: 'Just been for a pint, what about you?'

Douglas: [laughs] 'Fuck off!'

Dunford: 'It's alright, I'm over 18.'⁵⁴

Craven: [pointing at him] 'Shut up you little poof!'

She first develops the concept in *Between Men* (1985), from an obscure psychiatric diagnosis proposed by Edward J. Kempf in 1920. In his use it refers to panic arising from intense, unexpected and unwelcome same sex desires; Sedgwick develops its meaning into that of paranoia arising in Western men from the 19th century onwards over their relationships with other men (an idea which she interrogates further in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) in her concept of homosociality) as a result of a cultural shift towards regarding male same-sex interaction as (negatively) associated with potential homosexuality. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), p. 2; *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: California UP, 1990) pp.20-1.

⁵⁴ This line in itself echoes the child abuse theme, an ominous foreshadowing made more apparent by the unexpectedness of Dunford even jokingly feeling compelled to mention his age in relation to what he does not yet know is about to become a sexual assault. This is even more apparent in the working script, where they refer to one another as father and son, making the abusive dynamic even more explicit in a manner reminiscent of recording Hindley and Brady made of Lesley Ann Downey's abuse and death in which they made her call them mummy and daddy:

'CRAVEN: What's going on, son?

EDDIE: Been for a pint.

[...] I'm over 18, dad. Honest.

CRAVEN Come here, you little puff.'

This is also reiterated in the Karachi club scene later, where Craven (speaking of a gun) asks him, 'You sure you know which end to hold, son?', and, when he hits Craven with it in response, John Dawson calls out to him 'That's more like it! That's my boy!'

Tony Grisoni, *Red Riding 1974* provisional shooting script, [http://leethomson.myzen.co.uk/Red_Riding_-_1974.pdf] [ACCESSED 12/08/14].



At the end of this remark Douglas punches Dunford in the stomach and pushes him up against the car,⁵⁵ holding him whilst Craven apparently (and according to the book) grabs his testicles, apparently timing his attacks to fit his words – ‘it’s | not | very | *nice*, is it? | *Is it?*’ – so each movement from him (and wince from Dunford) punctuates his rhetorical questioning like a sergeant major giving a prostate exam. In an earlier draft of the script there are differences in dialogue, but also this scene is described as a penetrative assault:

Craven runs his finger between Eddie’s cheeks and pushes it up his arse.
 CRAVEN It’s not nice, is it.

⁵⁵ Pictured above (my captions).

DOUGLAS We'll be watching you.
CRAVEN (jabbing harder)
Always.
Craven kisses Eddie on the cheek.⁵⁶

The ambiguity of the final version is perhaps deliberate, in the tradition of the productive lacunae of crime texts that allows criminal activity to be displayed in a way that conceals its own parameters. While certainly a sexual assault, in the final screen version this is displayed as predominantly *assault*. Like the odd stand-in quasi-sexual scene discussed earlier vis-à-vis *Evil* – where Dave and Ian are presented *as if* we could think of them as sleeping together whilst clearly demarcating that un-presentable – this too has the pacing and delivery of an act more overtly sexual than it actually would seem to be. Craven's bodily movement creates an impression of repetitive thrusting that, while not necessarily penetrative, supports the sexual slant to an attack that is visually coded as ambiguous.⁵⁷ This blurring of multiple meanings allows the audience to intuit that Craven is, or is certainly capable of being, a rapist, without needing to directly show him engaging in the act. Thus, when we later discover that he has raped and murdered Claire Stracken, it is perhaps not only the display of his sexualised aggression throughout, but also this specific scene's stylised simultaneous display and concealment of sexual assault, that allows the flashback to her death to merely present Craven – bloody, shirtless, panting, wiping his mouth and holding a hammer – to tell us all we need to know about what he has been doing, with her body – her presence – completely absent.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ As discussed, the earlier script suggests it is, manually, whilst the fighting styles in the book (none of whose scenes is exactly analogous to this, as it is a composite of several instances) offer various applicable forms of sexual assault. Of course, in real life it is neither since this is acting, which in itself replicates the central productive lacuna in which the crime is never re-created, re-presented, it is always skirted around.

The car park assault scene is reprised at the end of the first film. After stripping and torturing Dunford in the basement at the police station, Douglas and Craven take him out in the van and threaten and further abuse him. Craven kisses Dunford after pretending to shoot him, before throwing him out of the moving vehicle.



This is not in the book, and so again (Harris and) the film version bring a sexualised excess to Craven's character.⁵⁸ It does, however, echo a scene in the second novel where Craven is alleged to have raped a sex worker in the back of a van (which the reader is not shown). The books contain a repeated and interchangeable set of stock 'double acts' in the form of basically anonymous violent, sexually assaulting and homophobically abusing police partners that recur again and again throughout the novels. This recurring image of male partners in itself also implies a homosexual panic element running throughout the narrative of both films and books. It presents the possibility either of Craven as either part of the 'protesting too much' school of homophobia, or, perhaps more interestingly, utilising as an instrument of violence the sense that, within a homophobic sexist society, a same-sex sexual assault – quite aside from the extremity of suffering caused simply in and of itself – represents the greatest possible horror and

⁵⁸ Whilst also dislodging sexual assault from the detached, dissociatively physical, purely genital focus these attacks have in the novels.

degradation he could inflict upon a male victim, placing them in a lower, dehumanised order, an object merely for use and destruction, their subjecthood brutally re-categorised to the same status as that of the women and children so abundantly treated thus as their order-of-being and purpose. These elements combine in creating Craven's aura of excess and lack of limits; in a spectrum of negative rape-cultural masculinities within the text, the non-gender-specificity, the unpredictability, of his targets, and thus the queerness of his violence, places him into a category of 'sadist' rather than merely 'male and bad'.

The conflation of the overlooked quotidian with queerness, sadism and multi-directional masculine excess that forms the heart of *Red Riding's* critique of masculine power parallels techniques at work in categorising and constructing Brady: an excessive yet ordinary abuser whom no one order of human being is safe from providing him pleasure through their pain. Thus, both these figures represent a radical sadist, challenging certain accepted tropes of expected masculine crime (and that follow on from, and feed into, other completely standard tropes of the gender non-conforming, multi-directional queer villain), and in so doing destabilise apparently discrete boundaries of personhood and objectification that delimit who are victims and who killers. The sexualising or fetishising of the male body is also an act of *vulnerablising* them. The damaged male bodies we are presented with throughout are un-spectacular (i.e. unremarkable and yet constantly on show). Unlike many such crime dramas the female body in pain or in death is not the visual or emotional locus here – indeed it is notable in its near-total absence from these films. For instance, as discussed above, the discovery of Craven's crime against Claire Stracken is not shown in the display of her suffering body but rather in his (post)inflicting one; the injuries we see are usually male. The books feature many

graphic descriptions of men raping women but the films do not show these. While violence against women and children form the backdrop and the setting – and in no way can it be suggested that this series is not about the abuse of women and children – the spectacle that we see again and again is adult male suffering, male vulnerability, male violence. Not male violence towards women per se, but male violence uncontained, as an activity, a force, a display. While it may elide the direct horror of what has been done to women and children, in the narrative and in the world it is based on, it side-steps the aestheticising of such torments and lays the focus, indeed the blame, of male violence where it belongs: with men.

Scapegoats and Sexualising the Abuser

In her review of *The Goob* (2014), film critic Catherine Bray summarises Harris's career, referring to him as a 'Plainview Red Herring' (i.e. a misleading clue or 'red herring' that is hiding in plain sight):

Harris is, as ever, a trump card as the villain of the piece. Harris, how do you repel us so? [...] He's been creepy as the junkie in [...] *Harry Brown*, horrifying as child killer Ian Brady in [...] *Evil*], weaselly in the forthcoming '71 [...] menacing in Neil Jordan's *The Borgias* and a nasty piece of work in [...] *Red Riding*. [...] If you're the director of a murder mystery in need of a Plainview Red Herring (to borrow a phrase from *22 Jump Street*), consider Harris: the man exudes bad news.⁵⁹

Sketching in his actor intertext by providing a constellation of related roles, her use of this epithet draws attention to the way in which he is not only often called upon to perform the role of an obvious 'bad guy', but specifically of one whose job, in plot terms, is to misdirect the viewer into thinking he is *the* Bad Guy, when instead he is in fact a fall

⁵⁹ Catherine Bray, 'Review: Low-key drama in the English fenland propels debut feature *The Goob*: Sean Harris reliably unsettling in Venice Days entry', *Hitfix*, Aug 26th 2014. [<http://www.hitfix.com/in-contention/review-low-key-drama-in-the-english-fenland-propels-debut-feature-the-goob#oDIKfDsJ85Lw1eOB.99>] [ACCESSED: 14/10/14]

guy for another villain (for example, as well as the 'Red Riding' adaptations, in *Jamaica Inn* (2014) and *True Love Once Removed* (2002)). In a further example of the genre's reliance on 'bait and switch' (or the deliberate construction, and then subversion, of misleading audience assumptions) he has established a niche as a reliable embodiment of a bad guy who is small fry compared to the real problem – whether of more powerful people, structural inequality, or both.

Such positioning is perfect for Peace's project of depicting 'social crime'. Harris pantomimes villainy ostentatiously, in stylised, excessively bodily terms, allowing other, more behaviorally normative characters, who are in fact quietly perpetrating worse or more widespread, societally-approved abuses, to be more easily overlooked. Such an acting oeuvre reflects back onto to his performance of Brady. Indeed the latent real-life class narrative of the Moors Murders case's trial also suggests it can be read thus: Brady's claim that there are 'better collections' of allegedly violent and pornographic materials 'in many lords manor houses across the country' has chilling undertones when we consider the widespread abuse, neglect and even murder of children perpetrated or covered up for unknown decades by the establishment and only now beginning to come to light.⁶⁰ It is notable that Harris's career has so predominantly involved performing characters who are themselves performative; who are engaged in acting out ostentatious villainy for their own egotistical purposes whilst actually being highly visible minor players in a far broader drama of largely invisible socially-mandated evil. Just as the telegraphed villainy of his characters provides such a cover for more powerful abusers, as a combination both of these figures' curated readability as villains and their expendability as working-class and outside or subordinate in establishment

⁶⁰ Lee, p.273.

power structures, so, in some ways, has Brady himself been the highly visible screen memory obscuring the ‘appalling vistas’ of state-sanctioned abuse. While in his portrayal of Brady this is not immediately obviously the case (one could say this is hidden in plain sight, in fact) because there is no equivalent character to ‘Red Riding’s’ John Dawson or Reverend Laws lurking behind him manipulating his actions, in adopting Peace’s ‘social crime’ purview we see that actually he *is* the ‘fall guy’ (albeit a self-generating one who is, of course, horrifically culpable enough on his own terms) for that which a culture of normalised rape-cultural violence and coercion wishes to disavow about itself.⁶¹ The bait and switch of the true crime genre is a misdirection, a sleight of hand, begging the question of what we are being directed away from if our attention is drawn to this. The captivating otherness, the queer spectacle, provided by the screen Brady – a pantomimed, visually and physically-performatively excessive Brady – in fact functions as a scapegoat for deeper powerbases of entrenched abuse.

An indication of the ambivalence – the combination of fascination, fetishisation and revulsion – inherent to representations of Brady that reveals the kind of associative intertextual logic at work is the fan tumblr for Harris.⁶² It is titled ‘King Of The Sex Cases’, clearly denoting him as that king, and provides a forum for fans to appreciate his looks and ‘intense’ acting style and to post pictures and clips of him for other fans to derive pleasure from looking at. This naming is disturbing however because the phrase is a quotation from a scene in *Evil*, in which the fictionalised Smith angrily compares the relative moral culpability of Hindley and Brady, finding her more wanting because

⁶¹ See also, relatedly, Schmid on the Gothic and its function of allowing undesirable traits to be deflected from mainstream society. Schmid, 2005, p10.

⁶² fuckyeahseanharris.tumblr.com [ACCESSED 08/03/13], a template-based user-generated composite blog of predominantly visual material, hosted on the social networking and microblogging platform tumblr (owned by Tumblr, Inc). Tumblr has a vast repository of quasi-erotic fan blogs with the URL ‘fuckyeah’ prefacing the desired name or object.

‘Brady’s just a sex case; the king of the sex cases’, whereas, in contrast ‘Myra’s human’ and has the capacity to love – and moreover, as a woman, the socially-ascribed compulsory responsibility to protect children. As Downing contends, Hindley’s

aiding and abetting of the murders and lack of pity for the child victims were considered worse crimes—or, more accurately, more unnatural things—than the male-perpetrated violence [... because] all women, whether technically mothers or not, are symbolically charged in this culture with maternity, with the burden of *caring for children*, and that dereliction of this duty carries a heavy penalty.⁶³

The use of this quotation for the fan tumblr is therefore jarring, in context, but also significant: whoever or whatever is the object of the ‘sex’ in this epithet is reversed upon the actor who plays him; Brady is the predator of whom one can expect no better, but Harris is objectified in his stead. The predator seeking to sexually abuse is now, through this stand-in, the object to be lusted over – and located specifically as a stand-in, in that the title of the tumblr refers not to Harris but to Brady. His fandom’s positioning of Harris the actor as overlapping in his persona with that of his roles places him in a position of both sexualising others and yet sexualised (like Williams’s Brady with his mirror and tape). This is *very much like* the mechanism by which true crime’s fetishisation of killers’ bodies allows the return of power to audiences who might otherwise be fair game for such a person, i.e., those with less power than normative men. The tumblr, named after a quotation that directly and explicitly identifies Brady as a sexual predator, turns those words back on him so that he is the powerless party in an economy of looking and circulation. In exchanging, consuming and objectifying images of Harris (or any actor who has portrayed a killer) performing an embodied signifier of villainy, such killers’ power to objectify is reversed as they become an object of the gaze.

⁶³ Downing, p.100.

This allows a symbolic catharsis of viewers' real fears of crime, experienced and exorcised in a safe setting, in a manner akin to that which Browder argues occurs through the use of romance-genre traits in written true crime.⁶⁴ It also provides an example of Kotsko's theorising of the male 'pervert' figure as heteronormative masculinity's equivalent of the 'manic pixie dream girl'.⁶⁵ The 'pervert' in Kotsko's formulation, as a rape cultural sexualiser, is a projected fantasy whose function is to ostensibly demand/force that which is desired of him upon those who desire him; a fantasy absolving responsibility, and allowing passivity, on the part of the desirer – a sexual parallel to the political spectacle. The sexualisation, physical othering and cultural pull of the male abuser – even some iterations of the paedophile figure – may also derive not merely from this, or from their construction from 'edginess' and (re)use of ciphers of heteronormative power dynamics legitimised by society, *but also* from the surveillance of screen sexual transgressions being one of the rare modes in which an intently focused look is often forced, through inability to depict the object of the abuser's desire, to instead enact this kind of camera gaze onto the desirer rather than the desired. Thus, the male abuser is fetishised in lieu of his victims, in consequence of the impossibility of depicting the objects of their desire *as* objects of desire.

Mulvey's use of the 'gaze' is as a specifically erotic(ised) site of exchange – of power inequality – as though the spectacle were in itself only and inherently the 'strip-tease'.⁶⁶ Thus her conception of the gaze is based on a specific (and implicitly non-consensual)

⁶⁴ Browder, 2006.

⁶⁵ Adam Kotsko, *Creepiness*, pp.53-4; p.79; pp.78-83.

⁶⁶ As if, for example, there were no military, sporting, or theatrical spectacles, or indeed even ones requiring no bodies whatsoever (fireworks displays, for example, or the formation flying performances of groups like 'The Red Arrows'). In her use it is also a specifically masculine gaze, in a Lacanian tradition.

formulation of sex work.⁶⁷ The techniques that Mulvey attends to as key to this process for women onscreen is also something we very much see at work for the male *as villain*: the framing that cuts up the body into parts; the use of lingering close ups and a camera gaze that travels over a body. The first scene in which we encounter Sutcliffe in *Portrait* is a prime example of this, and also presents him enacting such techniques *upon himself* in the framing of the angled mirrors.⁶⁸ Sutcliffe is in no way positioned within the plot of *Portrait* as any kind of erotic prospect, so this is purely an extra-diegetic fetishism rather than the viewer being signposted to identify with a character's gaze upon him. This extra-diegetic fetishism without identification within the plot has abundant corresponding examples in the depiction of Craven in the 'Red Riding' adaptations. He is refuted as a potential romantic agent in the series, his homosocial pseudo- love-triangle with Hunter and Marshall remaining precisely that, symbolic and pseudo. Yet there is a deep visual intimacy with him as an embodied character. These texts' drawing out of the anticipation of violence, flirting around it, and concealing it whilst drawing attention to that concealment, parallels the narrative conventions of a seduction. It is very much *as violent* that his physicality is shown, yet the means of doing so employs the conventions of an eroticised gaze, creating tension rather than sexual tension. In a manner reminiscent of the kind of ontological clash of sensuality and suffering discussed in Chapter One, this blending of threat with sexually-coded looking heightens fear rather than fascination, a haptic disgust rather than an erotic response.

One key example, conveyed through a dreamlike lingering set of slowly-paced shots, is the scene in which, preparing to torture Dunford, Craven slowly rolls up the sleeves of

⁶⁷ This sex work template also adds an interesting facet to representations of the Yorkshire Ripper case (and Williams's claims that Brady had engaged in sex work whilst at Borstal).

⁶⁸ A visual framing, albeit in a written descriptive form, also occurring in the masturbation scene in *Beyond Belief*, as I have demonstrated in Chapter One.

his shirt, then removes and slowly folds up his tie, and then removes and winds up his watch – before placing his handcuffs precisely over his own knuckles, adopting a performative bodily stance to demonstrate his commands to Dunford, and proceeding to beat him with the cuffs:



Taken in isolation, the first set of actions could be those of a man preparing for ablutions or getting ready for bed (whether in sexual or sleep contexts), that, to watch, feels oddly voyeuristic, like a trespass of privacy. It constitutes yet another example of true crime's focus on of the minute physical detail of the quotidian. Yet also the act of taking off his watch seems ritualistic, symbolic of going into a different kind of time, a dividing line between the time before the torture begins and its commencement. This kind of marshalling of time – an attempt to establish a separation between the act of killing, torturing, abusing, and that of everyday existence – is reminiscent of the temporal demarcation of the recording of Downey's murder in *Alma Cogan*.⁶⁹ There, as here, the time before and during torture are marked out as separate from one another in a slow, ritualistic progression that buckles under the weight of the act it precedes; a separation that of course can only ever be partial, incomplete, illusory, and that reveals its own impossibility by the weakness of its demarcations even as it sets them up. It might also be interpreted as the character ritualistically getting into the frame of mind and the role of the torturer – shrugging off one role to take on another – but in doing so (because of the impossibility of escaping the *mise-en-scène*) it also offers the spectacle of his body apportioned in different shots, not a complete whole, perhaps not only in a fetishistic

⁶⁹ See Chapter One.

gaze but also to symbolise the compartmentalisation of, and consequent possibility of 'putting on', different identities.

In terms of its formal techniques, its ritual, bodily and procedural intimacy, the scene echoes those scenes of killers' fastidious erotic rituals in *Beyond Belief* and *Portrait*, chiming with the laying out of tools-as-weapons in the latter, the careful mirror positioning in the former. The facial expression we are shown in medium close up - an intent grimacing grin - is reminiscent of the wolfish grin Williams describes on Brady observing himself in the mirror.



It brings us uncomfortably close to the man *as a man*, even as he is in the process of ritualistically effacing his humanity to become a purely embodied functionary of a cruel regime. As with the autoerotic scenes, here we see this doubling of the body; the subject is there but not there: at their most physically present as they are most mentally/internally absent from their immediate surroundings into a subjective realm of their fantasy or actions' meaning. It reveals that any boundary between the figures of the 'sex beast' and the coldly instrumental enforcer is completely fallacious – the entire

underpinning of the abuse scandals of Yewtree and others: that cruel sexual domination and the machinery of state authority are never completely separate no matter how we may construct them as poles apart. The scene also reveals it to be a two-way process, textually speaking: Craven's character brings a libidinal excess to his functions as a foot-soldier of exploitation and degradation, but the text brings the same sensual patina to the presentation thereof: i.e. in showing us someone drawing out a beating, the text itself draws out a beating. As we may have surmised from Craven's anticipatory smirk, the scene explicitly refutes a libido/authority split: he is not only getting into the role but getting off on it, becoming on some level excited by the task he is about to perform. This is akin to Williams's teacher/pimp image discussed in Chapter One. It is necessary for the presentation of the material it offers but, while not simply replicating exploitation, it certainly echoes or shadows it. As Barthes asks, 'Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes?'⁷⁰ The spectacle of lacunae, the *gesture to concealment itself*, is the primary object of fascination, rather than anything under it – that is, the gesture itself, not what it purports to conceal: a striptease.

Its use of the display of nakedness and (relatedly but not always overlappingly) the sexualising gaze as a means of *vulnerabilising* male bodies and male characters is demonstrated in the staginess of the tableau of Craven, topless, sitting up in a hospital bed displaying his wounds, like a billboard for his own damaged body. This is the matching inverse, the other bookend, of the torture scene in which he ritualistically removes some of his clothes. The fact that Craven is in a position to be fastidiously tweaking his arrangement of clothes thus while Dunford is naked save a rough woollen blanket provides an emblematic microcosm of strategies by which power and

⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (London: Hill and Wang, 1980), First published 1973, p.9.

humiliation are achieved. Dunford's wounds, a recurring visual focal point of the first film, are in this scene of injured nudity the parallel of Craven's in his hospital scene (in which he is recovering from a beating inflicted by Dunford). The two echo one another, reinforcing the overwhelming theme of normalised male violence whilst also acting as proxy injuries – another bait and switch – with which to deflect the display of male violence towards women and children by inscribing it on male bodies. This palimpsest of pain visually inscribed onto bodies also emphasises the radical abjection of all bodies in 'Red Riding' (both films and books) as, under the socially criminal conditions of heterosexist capitalism, only *for* hurting and enduring hurt.

In *This Is Personal* (David Richards, 2000), the impersonally-displayed unexceptional body of the fictionalised Yorkshire Ripper is displayed in a way his victims' are not. In contrast to his representational tradition, this text never constructs symbolically and identity-invested displays of his eyes: instead *This Is Personal* focuses on his hands; we never see his face until the very end, when Oldfield dramatically bursts into his interview. Our first sight of him presents him removing his clothes and stripping to his underwear, shot in full length from the back. This interestingly contrasts with how, in an earlier scene, a female stripper was shown in medium close up head and shoulders shots, presented as someone undertaking a task rather than as a body to be looked at. Despite her job involving display of the body, her scene is as a human agent while the Ripper is subject to an anonymising yet particularising gaze, never showing his face, never shot from his point of view, instead backshot in only his underwear, the camera panning down him. This is the only time in the series that the camera moves over the body of a character thus, suggesting once more the displacement of focus from female victims' bodies to those of male perpetrators. The static-ness is in fact part of the lack of

visual pleasure throughout this text, which adopts a very straightforward workaday cinematography. Yet the Ripper is shown doing this for a reason. Unlike in *Portrait*, or in Williams's account of Brady's nudity, it is not sexual, it is not for his own or anyone else's enjoyment, but rather instrumental and therefore active – he is disposing of his blood-soaked clothes in a hurry, perhaps a panic, after an attack in which he was almost caught. His victims, in contrast, while not lingered over, are presented in a tableau-like way, a single shot of an object that used to be someone, but is now a thing against a backdrop, like a fallen leaf or a found object in a photograph.

Evil also has a scene in which Brady is partially naked. While this is part of the text's forensic intertext, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, it is also excessive within the text in a way that, by its superfluity, hints at its true purpose. In the diegetic context of the other characters and the location, it is completely out of place: on the moors in a storm, while Myra, Maureen and Dave are huddled against the cold, clutching coats and scarfs around themselves for warmth. The significance of this is multifaceted: it creates an impression of Brady as excessive, and unconcerned with convention; it emphasises his Scottishness and the nation's stereotypes of hardiness (particularly in context of the dialogue); it creates a screen memory stand-in for the unrepresentable intimacies of both his consensual relationship with Myra and his abuse of his victims. In so doing, it alludes with a material rawness to an element of the case so consistently and formally elided: that of the conditions of his abuse of children and young people.⁷¹ In this scene his naked torso, its physical proximity to, and his teasing and unnecessary aggression towards, Dave (in which he offers to 'educate' him) combine to act as ciphers for the

⁷¹ Exactly the kind of material conditions glimpsed when an appalling vista was revealed by Brady's slip of the tongue in his testimony under questioning at trial: asked what happened after the incidents captured on the Downey recording, despite his earlier protestations that the child had not been assaulted, he said 'we all got dressed and went downstairs'.

crux of the case's horror, that cannot be directly represented onscreen. Again, in a superfluity that reveals its own importance, no other character is presented thus. Dave is never displayed like this, even though we see him in his vest at bedtime or with Maureen, and despite the actor Matthew McNulty being young, conventionally attractive, and cast as a love interest in other media. Likewise Hindley – even when shown undressing for bed – is never made into either spectacle or stand-in. Presenting onscreen any part of the killer's naked body is surely not a neutral act and the fact that it is accompanied in this scene with his threats and flirtatious aggressive power play towards Dave is yet another example of Dave's use as a proxy for those Brady, in nudity, in gratification, harmed.

Similarly, like Dave, Dunford is not sexualised but humanised by his nudity and bodily display – despite, firstly, being played by Andrew Garfield (a popular young actor publically considered conventionally handsome, who subsequently went on to become a Hollywood heart-throb) and, secondly, having sexual subplots with two female characters with whom we see him having intercourse.⁷² So while we might for a variety of reasons expect to see him subjected to some form of sexual gaze, it is consistently far more a vulnerablising and humanising gaze, creating an effect of compassionate intimacy which establishes a more nuanced or rounded characterisation. For example, when Dunford is topless and looking at the pictures of the victims that he has been given, their shared bare skin creates an equivalence suggesting his empathy for them and their shared vulnerability. Or, when he is naked in the basement torture scene there is no lingering or movement over him from the camera; even the shots in which we see

⁷² His positioning is as an aspirational yet flawed everyman, of sorts, who is relatable to young male audiences, underscores the horror but also the pervasiveness of capitalism's and abuse's everyday violence: even if you're a man, even if you're 'cool', young and attractive to women – i.e. conform to a normative masculine ideal – this can still happen to you.

him from the outside are focalised through his subjectivity and thus have an abrasive lighting conveying shock, distortion. So, we begin to see a pattern emerge, in which protagonists are humanised, villains are, even if non-erotically per se, fetishised. The treatment of villains thus creates a similar kind of ontologically troubling overlap and sense of unease as the juxtaposition of glamour and abuse in the true crime fictions discussed in Chapter One; their non-eroticised visual pleasure meets their sexualised violence to construct their threat. The *not showing* of villains as potential diegetic sexual possibilities for other characters adds to, rather than detracts from, their objectification and also their exceptionality. Yet this *also* renders them spectacular and shirks the responsibility of representing their integration within ordinary human relations and societal roles – the killer may not be shown to kiss, and yet, constructing a hermetically fetishistic un-relational murderer figure allows us the false luxury of an imagined separation from our own (projectedly normative) goals and feelings.

As with Brady's shirtless moorland confrontation, Craven's removal of clothes is always out of place, in non-intimate, non-domestic spaces. He has no parallel to Dunford or Hunter's relationship story arcs and their resultant visual depiction of romantic intimacy. Indeed, he seems to have no private life whatsoever, regardless of his sexual boasts. His is a closed-off hegemonic masculinity, distancing itself while instrumentalising others. Instead, the staged slices of time in which he unclothes his body are set in impersonal spaces of bodily invasion: in hospital; in a garage in which he commits rape and murder; in the basement torture chamber at the police station. He is never shown disrobing, say, in a bedroom, or even a house, not even to presage a scene of violence. His removal of clothes also never results in actual nudity, but rather a mixed and pollutant periphery of it: a repeated partial nakedness that gestures to the recurrent

theme of the display/hide lacuna that fetishises by almost but not quite showing a thing. This tendency is particularly noticeable when counterpoised with how *overdressed* he usually is. From the moment he first appears in 1974 goose-stepping in full silver-buttoned uniform with black leather gloves and hat, an ensemble covering his whole body but his face, to the wide-flared three-piece suit of 1983's flashbacks, to 1980's oversized padded-shouldered coat worn whilst off duty in the bar and his standard costume of voluminous shirts and big kipper ties, his excessive costumes all serve to emphasise the comparative slightness of his physical frame, rendering him *literally a stuffed shirt*, an empty uniform. This contrast creates an impression of armour, underscoring his role as a foot soldier to the more powerful (and indeed the police's role as such in society), and functions as a symbol of masculinity's defensive fragility. It also provides a surprisingly effective translation of the kind of anonymous physical templates of the quasi-archetypal henchmen in Peace's original books, who are uniformly described only by the most stripped-back outlines of clothes or appearance, with one detail of body or clothing used to stand in for the whole, as though they were infinitely replaceable identical drones: merely man-shaped cut outs.

Raw Materials: Reification

When asked about his hobbies by Hunter, his superior officer, Craven replies 'I like chewing minge'. In the book he says he likes hunting, which suggests a certain interchangeable correspondence between the activities for the purposes of the conversation. Later, when his colleague Helen Marshall is slightly late, Craven attributes this to her being on her period and immediately follows this remark with 'mind you I do like a bit of gravy with my beef', a crude sexual euphemism. The language is of food,

specifically, of meat. 'Chewing minge' is a very aggressive expression for oral sex; there were many less violent slang expressions he could have used that would not have created such literal implications of consuming or harming. In both instances the (cis) female sexual organs are the sole focus of his remark; rather than saying, more crudely, that he likes to have sexual contact with women he not only reduces them to only their genitalia but also likens that genitalia to dead meat, unconnected with feeling or personality, to simply be consumed. This is reminiscent of the way Smith posits that Sutcliffe's crimes were an expression of extreme anxiety about his own femininity projected upon specifically fetishised female-coded body parts that he felt the need to symbolically 'kill' over and over again: reducing individual women to an anonymised collection of body parts, signifying a universal and hated feminine, to be harmed and consumed.⁷³ As Smith argues, Sutcliffe is imagined in Gothic, grotesque contrast to a hypothetical normal man.⁷⁴ Hunter, briefing his team, reiterates this sentiment, chiding them for expecting the killer to be visibly marked as Other: 'you're looking for a hunchback with a hammer in his pocket and flesh between his teeth'.⁷⁵ Instead, Hunter continues, the Ripper has 'the same crap in his life we've all got', and probably 'the wife, the kids'. Hunter's argument to avoid turning him into a monster and instead look to (heterosexual married) men like themselves is countered with jovial hostility by Craven in a way that only *amply* proves the point: in announcing 'I like chewing minge' he declares himself yet another monster with 'flesh between his teeth'.

⁷³ Smith, pp.191-2; p.201.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.165.

⁷⁵ This also has a double meaning in that a clue from a bite mark on a victim of a different murderer that was misattributed to the Ripper led police to believe that their suspect has a gap between his teeth – one of the criteria that was used to falsely rule Sutcliffe out of the investigation. Smith, p.186.

Craven is a part of the same jarring sexualised competition between men that we have seen displayed in Williams's portrayal of Brady's teenage exploits and in Burn's of Sutcliffe's workmates' expectations of banter and showing naked pictures of their wives. This connects with the kind of visceral, often gendered and violent food imagery we find so abundantly in *Somebody's Husband*. The emblematic quotation from this account is 'women are for frying bacon and screwing', whereas 'thick skin', 'sharp tongue' and 'strong stomach' are presented as the manly virtues.⁷⁶ Burn recounts sticks of seaside rock being known as 'wife-beaters' and a Sutcliffe family friend waiting for a letter from a woman he liked (referred to as an 'old tart' – also a food word) being sent a packet of animal guts, as a joke, and another man having an earring ripped out as an affectation. The connection between emotion, femininity and dead meat is hammered home, foregrounding women as consumable, owned, with a lack of right to bodily autonomy. Burn claims that in Sutcliffe's town chickens, even from the supermarket, were routinely buried for a day or two outside to get 'ripe' before eating, and skinned hares hung on washing lines to dry out for use. Burn's use of such incidents construct a setting of local intimacy with violence and viscera, a primitiveness beneath an apparent modernity. The connection between the imagined North and this kind of food as symbolic of a tough macho milieu is encapsulated by A.K. Nawaz's term for 'Northern Noir' writing: 'black pudding brutality'.⁷⁷

This associative tradition is dramatised in Morrison's poem *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper*,

'E didn't like folks shoutin,
or scraps wi lads, or dirt.

⁷⁶ Burn, 1984, pp.67-8.

⁷⁷ A.K. Nawaz, 'Black pudding brutality - in praise of northern English crime novels', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2014.

E'd watch his dad trough offal –
trotters, liver, tripe –
or pigeon from t'by-pass,
or rabbit, ung an ripe,

an all e'd felt were babyish,
[...] alf-nowt
an wished e were is younger kid
tekkin lasses out.'⁷⁸

Morrison specifically depicts Sutcliffe's treatment of his victims and of their remains within the context of butchery and meat-production, 'deguttin em like meat', using 'cutlery', comparing one victim's forehead to a 'smashed-egg', really making the comparison utterly clear in the following lines: 'E were a one-man abattoir. | E cleavered girls in alves. | E shishkebab'd their pupils. | E bled em dry like calves'.⁷⁹ However, in addition to using such terms to show Sutcliffe's inhuman treatment of women, he also turns this dehumanisation back onto Sutcliffe himself, exemplifying the commodification process of celebrity, as though through that very inhumanity, and through being captured and put on trial, Sutcliffe himself became, in a different way, a piece of meat: 'All through th[e trial] Pete's bearin | were cold as marble slab | ard as a joint from t'freezer, | slant as a Scarborough crab'.⁸⁰

'Manly' food in *Somebody's Husband* is presented as disgusting to women and bodily, internal, gruesome. Sutcliffe's father emphasises how impressed he was with his own father eating lots of offal, specifically because women are excluded from this practise.⁸¹ Burn links it with his high standing in the community, creating an impression of a powerful esoteric ritual, and one that is specifically homosocial: 'it were me grandad's

⁷⁸ Morrison, 1987, pp.25-6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.27-9.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.34.

⁸¹ But apparently women will not touch it, so presumably the men have to cook it – a female-coded activity. Burn does not comment on this.

and it were beautiful'.⁸² The cherished offal is in stark contrast to total lack of representation of the food and care given by female relatives. Rather, offal is a masculine rite of passage. John learned to eat it and thus through 'man's food' at an early age became known as "'a real lad", or just "real"', rendering other types of lad, and women and girls, unreal, non-existent; he directly castigates Peter as effeminate for his dislike of offal.⁸³ Sutcliffe's father is quoted telling the young Peter about a 'weed' he'd known who has been turned by the army into a muscle man – using the language of food: 'I could've eaten him for breakfast [before, but after] he would've made mince-meat out of me'.⁸⁴ Meat is directly linked to masculinity, which is linked to fighting, yet emotion and self-consciousness are equated with femininity and weakness and reduced to injured or inert flesh, policing a mandatory masculinity of callousness and self-containment.

This figuring of women as meat – as displaced, removed animal parts – literalises both the trade in women of homosociality and the reifying instrumentalising exploitation of capitalism. Indeed 'Red Riding' is sharply literal in combining the two in the violent and exploitative working conditions for porn and sex-work for which the justice system and its shadow system of corrupt officers are jointly responsible. Meat/animal parts are bodily gendered in contradictory ways, both claiming the same tropes for different readings; meat is a signifier of manliness but also what women are. Nawaz's 'black pudding brutality' directly links blood and consumption, elegantly encapsulating the reification process flagged up in these texts. Bodies become meat, which becomes matter, a raw material, simply ballast or commodity, until finally, 'it was only information': their very materiality is why they *don't* matter. This is what media and

⁸² Burn, 1984, p.7.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.23.

history *do to* people: repeating the violent severing of lives and identities from bodies, so that, for victim and killer alike, they become, like meat, a product. Yvette Greslé asks 'how one resists re-inscribing violence and objectification [and] what kinds of visual languages speak to historical violence without re-inscribing spectacle'.⁸⁵ Thus, history acts as enforcer of a neutralising materiality, performing the same role as state authority earlier in the chapter. Meat also implies the instrumentalist taming of animals, gesturing towards the class issue of what the supposedly higher orders arrange to work for them and to be used up for them. As argued in my Introduction, this reading ultimately reveals that the working-class are kept to be worked by their masters: capitalism *is* exploitation, *is* the abattoir. These texts foreground the process of turning bodies into simply matter (which murderers are engaged in, but so is capitalism and indeed mere existence), both emblematising yet effacing the spectacle of reification in which bodies and lives become products, in which representation effects the transmutation of suffering into data, of bone and blood into pixels and celluloid and ink.

In The Frame

As is typical of the genre, *Evil*, like *Longford*, presents news and media motifs throughout. Indeed, the genre's particular use of news allows several objectives to be accomplished simultaneously and economically: firstly, creating realism and a sense of immediacy of time and milieu; secondly, critiquing news media's construction of the case and the way it was sensationalised, establishing the killers as celebrities in its immediate reception; and thirdly, providing an ethical scapegoat to displace unease as

⁸⁵ Yvette Greslé, "Empathic unsettlement" in the field of vision: Jo Ractliffe's *Vlakplaas* in Photographs and Video, *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 29:1 (Routledge and UNISA, 2015), pp.73-87, p.84.

to their own contribution to this celebrity spectacle. The texts are replete with a self-reflexive media iconography of 'quality' and 'tabloid' strands of true-crime television and film genres.



The main example of representing news media in this text is the scene in which we are shown the press conference at Ashton market, containing Detective Mounsey's appeal for witnesses and a re-enactment of the last time John Kilbride was seen (at the market) in which his brother Danny plays the role of him. A reporter's voice from off-camera asks Mrs Kilbride, 'does Danny look a lot like John?' and she replies 'the thing is, Danny looks frightened now, whereas, our John, you never saw him without a smile on his face', indicating the artificiality of the proceeding and also the traumatic effect of performing what may be one of his sibling's last actions before death. As he comes towards the camera the reporters call out to him 'Danny, Danny look over here son!' 'Over here!' and similar phrases, indicating their desire to manipulate his performance for their own ends, to stage-manage his presentation for public consumption. This performance theme, both of playing a part but also of directing others to act in a drama not of their devising, lingers and insinuates itself into every part of this text. It draws attention both to the performing of roles we are all expected to participate in within society, but also, to

the way in which specifically the discovering of a crime makes people performers, but also limits and temporally constricts the performance they are able to give. Whatever their connection to the crime, its media and forensic apprehension forces them into codifying their actions, attitudes and relationships within a set of roles, to simplify and to narrate messy reality, to 'get their story straight' as it were. Victims, witnesses and criminals alike are immediately frozen into public consciousness like a game of musical statues: the discovery of the crime and the media's immediate response solidifies them into the stance they were in when the music stopped.



This sense of becoming a static snapshot of public history continues as the scene progresses. Mounsey speaks straight into the camera, framed by news cameras around him, literally foregrounding the media context in which he speaks. He asks the public to refer back to another piece of news media turning real suffering into instant history:

John Kilbride went missing on the 23rd of November last year. Now that is the day *after* president Kennedy was assassinated, *everybody* remembers where they were that day, what we want people to do is think back, did you go to Ashton the next day, and if you did, did you come to this market and did you see this boy?

This offers us a tightly economical expression of both the intermeshing of violence and its reportage into everyday life, *and* of how it is that life becomes news, news becomes

memory, and both become history. But *also*, it shows how the media and the police are aligned when creating authority and official versions of the truth. This is also reiterated in the scene where we see the reporters at the police dig on the moor. As with the re-enactment press conference scene, the press literally frame the narrative, their figures standing around at the edges of the shot, literally foregrounding their presence and our viewpoint as behind – and through – theirs.

While the press are foregrounded, the public are backgrounded. The use of the urban public shopping space for this press conference, with ‘the public’ in evidence within it conveys, not quite Sparrow’s totemic aspirational supermarket of working-class leisure, but certainly a sense of collectiveness appropriate to a general appeal – the mass that constitutes its implied audience is visibly present surrounding it in its moment of creation. Yet it also constructs them as anonymous and unimportant: exceptional celebrities like President Kennedy and the Moors Murderers are history; everyone else is simply the backdrop against which that history takes place, visibly-invisible set-dressing, figures not *in* a landscape but *as* a landscape. Likewise, later on the moor, when the press are reporting on the search for bodies, the bodies of the searchers are also treated *as* landscape here too, as iconography. In some scenes in these texts the mass of the general public is deployed specifically as a mass, e.g. people battering the police van, the market shoppers, the streets, the press throng, sex workers as anonymous collections of bodies, this last set in particular suggesting their bleak reification, in which the lives of those inside those bodies are treated as beside the point: bodies, living or dead.

Bill Molloy looking into the camera giving his press statement at the beginning of 1980 is very similar to Mounsey's appeal.⁸⁶



Molloy's press statement (pictured above) is clearly based on the real broadcast by George Oldfield:



This in turn strongly resembles the footage in *Portrait* in which a psychiatrist is making a press appeal to the Ripper (below). All three are strikingly visually similar, right down to the framing, their faces, and the recurring brightly patterned curtains:

⁸⁶ A similar scene is also performed by the leading officer in *This Is Personal*.



The contents of news media derive from the crimes and catastrophes of ordinary life, and recirculate into the backdrop for that ordinary life itself: designed to package and sell 'other people's misery', they are re-circulated as culture and myth. The context in which images – and narratives – are encountered become conflated with them. Thus social history is constructed from lived quotidian experience, but news events – constructed of narratives and images – in turn become part of that quotidian: the picture in the magazine, the name thrown casually into conversation, the comparison of a hairstyle, the newspaper lining a drawer. *Evil* gestures to this by depicting a newspaper reporting the disappearance of Lesley Ann Downey on top of Hindley's wardrobe: both hidden secret and overlooked commonplace, simultaneously full and empty of significance, its slipping from its hiding place into view enacting a physically literal return of the repressed. Culture and history are made from lived experiences, and lived experience is constructed through popular culture and history: 'everybody remembers where they were that day'.

[illegible]

We see Myra and Ian's faces in the papers, their names on the radio, in the police appeal, and news reports, as well as commenting on the newspaper report of Downey's disappearance (i.e. their own crime) in the newspaper which has been hidden on top of

the wardrobe. Thus these killers are shown as consumers of culture and the raw materials of it.

Chapter 3: Music

1970s-80s: Punk and Industrial

Ten years after Hindley and Brady were arrested, punk and industrial musicians began to represent the case in a variety of formats: music, visual art, film, fashion. 1975-84 constituted a boom period for popular music's engagement with true crime in the UK, especially in relation to the criminal cases this thesis covers. The Moors Murders case re-emerged into the news media spotlight because of Lord Longford's campaign for Myra Hindley's release in 1977. This, combined with the temporal distance afforded by the passage of time, opened up a creative gap between the Moors Murders and the present of the '70s. The availability and public digestion of the first wave of representations of that landmark criminal case in news and true crime forms coincided with the emergence of alternative popular music and specifically the punk and industrial genres¹ – and indeed socio-political movements – emerging from (both in continuation of and in pushing against) precisely the kinds of radical changes to society discussed in my Introduction. While development of these genres and their relation to the Moors Murders case was underway, the arrest and trial of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe and its surrounding media boom were taking place, falling amid a cultural moment already primed to take artistic advantage of it. This occurred against a backdrop, more broadly, of the musical exploration of violence, abuse, war, exploitation and so on in these specific punk, industrial and alternative cultural forms, all of which are generically and in terms of cultural brand alignment grouped both *with* serial killers as a topic, and, in the public perception, with the interests *of* serial killers. That is, the consumption of true

¹ Of course neither are stable, neat, uncontested generic parameters.

crime and other written, screen and musical texts depicting murder, war, atrocity, etc. are constitutive of both an ur-genre in which the figure of the serial killer is central, but also, of the cultural imaginary of what texts and interests serial killers consume and are shaped by. Indeed, this cultural imaginary of the archetypical serial killer was emerging historically alongside, (and out of) these other developments; the term serial killer in English is widely believed to have been coined in 1974.² The factors outlined above generated these cases' extreme *closeness* and *relevance* to the zeitgeist of the mid-twentieth-century's anxieties and opportunities.

In this chapter I apply the argument made thus far – that true-crime genres rely on intertextual reference to other cultural products, meta-presentation of media crime representations, and construction of material bodies in material spaces – to popular music's re-presentation of the criminals whose cultural resonance this thesis addresses. I contend that all three of these key true-crime elements in fact emerge from the same source, a source particularly germane to popular music: that of commodity and commodification. Intertext and meta-media presentation rely on the use and circulation of cultural commodities as a kind of cultural capital that boosts the meaning, weight, brand positioning – the connotational reach – of the text beyond its own internal parameters. The representation both of commodities, and of the commodification of bodies, spaces and identities, not only adds to this, but enables it in the first place. This is particularly the case when it comes to evoking a time period. Thus true crime and time are locked into one another, each relying on the other for their construction.

² Robert Ressler and Tom Shachtman, *Whoever Fights Monsters: My Twenty Years Tracking Serial Killers for the FBI* (New York: St Martin, 1992) pp. 31-3. While in fact, as Schmid argues, “serial murder” as a term predates such claims by several decades’ (Schmid, 2005, p.68), their prominance, emergence into the media, and subsequent circulation both indicated and created the centrality of the figure for the culture of the time.

While the genre of 'true-crime song' does not pre-exist this thesis, I group songs this way for simplicity and for consistency; there are songs across various times and genres that, like true-crime books or screen media, employ and contribute to the same kinds of constructions as other forms of true crime. Music can, like any other text, work as a representational form replicating and utilising true-crime elements, which have their own trajectory of change over time. However, their own themes and anxieties that remain consistent are recognisably those of true crime more broadly, constructed from the same materialities of space, landscape, commodities and bodies employed across textual genres to construct the spatial, temporal and sociocultural locus of these crimes. At the same time, music has a more diffuse, less directly representational relationship with these cases than the screen or textual media I discuss. The figures are treated in a more archetypal, symbolic way (e.g. the figure based on Sutcliffe has no internal textual specificity in Luke Haines' 'Leeds United' (2007) ('the man with jet black hair and come to bed eyes') and Siouxsie and the Banshees' 'Night Shift' ('a happy go lucky chap, always dressed in black')(1981): indicators of his identity are largely contextual. Musical true crime has far less fetishisation of the apparent self-declamatory accuracy of detail (Throbbing Gristle's 'Very Friendly', for example, makes use of deliberate inconsistency and inaccuracy), suggesting an interest in a different kind of – or way of suggesting – authenticity.

Although the nature of music as a medium precludes the directly visual, visual elements are used paratextually, to frame the text itself and market it, in terms of providing further intertexts and associations and allowing further management of the 'cultural capital' the song brings with it (including, frequently, the minutely fetishised bodies of

the performers). This establishes a brand to promote consumption of releases, tours, memorabilia and the musicians themselves as stars. It also promotes a set of expectations for the text's reader. Sleeve notes, album covers, promo art, and music videos function like advertisements for the music itself. In the context of true crime, they work not only in a way very like book covers and DVD covers, but also like the credits in TV and film texts: i.e. as a way of introducing a wealth of material and associations and, in a true crime context, of justifying intertexts, creating authority, without having to engage explicitly with them within the text. These visual frames become the shadow corpus of the music itself. Likewise, the use of samples, particularly from quasi-forensic media texts (e.g. news reports of the cases; fragments of interviews with victims' families) is also a part of this corpus-building, collage-like intertextual canon creation that Paget calls 'documentary coding' and 'intelligence gathering' in a screen context.³ Thus, musical true crime conforms to one of the key areas I have identified: not merely intertext but also the meta-presentation of the media's crime representation at work.

Materiality is arguably the most basic integral part of true crime, and yet, while it encompasses the natural world – and while time is not, of itself, material – the depiction of crime and of time relies upon commodities, products, and cultural artefacts. This process is what allows the use of cultural products as iconography to construct times, places and crimes as though they were genres – but also what then turns them, by extension, into iconographic and generic commodities themselves. These in turn can then be used to construct times, places, moods, etc. As demonstrated in Chapter One, written true-crime accounts typically begin with, or place near the beginning, a depiction of the locale of the crime, the criminals, and their physical appearance in

³ Throbbing Gristle's 'Leeds Ripper' (Paragoric, 1982) and The Manic Street Preachers' 'Archives of Pain' (Epic, 1994); Paget, 1999, p.197.

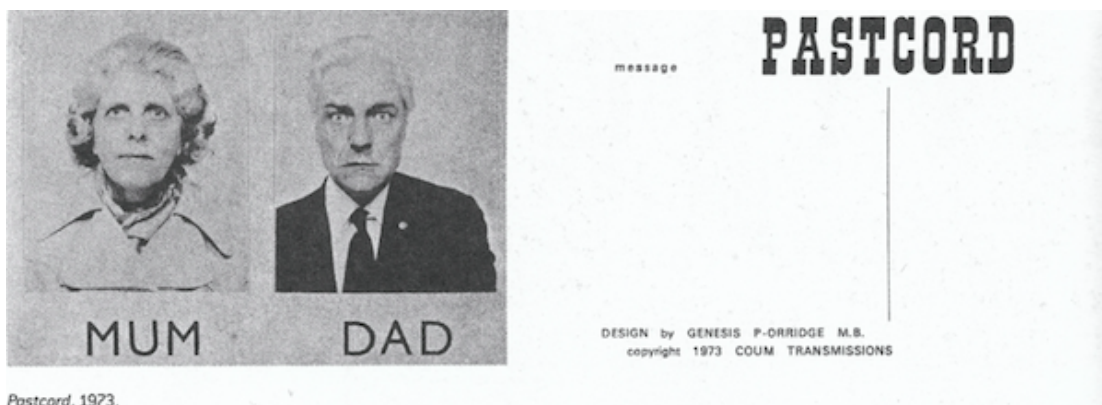
context of the place's 'typical' inhabitants. As shown in Chapter Two, screen accounts also follow this pattern. Songs depicting real criminal cases, however, tend not to start from the physical setting or attributes of the criminal or their contemporaries – they usually include this material, in some form, but not as an opener.

Like other such true-crime forms, music about crime is similarly locked into a paradoxical resistance to, and complicity with, criminal celebrity, cultural memory, spectacle, reification etc. As seen above, particularly in the latter half of Chapter One ('Historical Abuse'), the ways these texts use and construct the figure of the famous murderer has much to tell us about popular culture's response to official history, and to competing yet coexisting resistant histories. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, this underlying focus on authenticity, commodity and official narratives found throughout true-crime representations is particularly prevalent and acute in popular 'alternative' music as an art form self-consciously positioning and indeed marketing itself as one of resistance.

The first song about the Moors Murders case was Throbbing Gristle's 'Very Friendly', and its history as an artefact is reflective of and illuminating in regards to the DIY practises of the industrial and punk genres at the time, of which Throbbing Gristle and Crass were at the political and artistic forefront.⁴ The song adheres to many of the

⁴ Brian Cogan, "Do They Owe Us a Living? Of Course They Do!" Crass, Throbbing Gristle, and Anarchy and Radicalism in Early English Punk Rock', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 77–90. Crass also did a song about Hindley as an emblem of the antithesis of motherhood, 'Mother Earth' (*Stations of the Crass*, 1980). Unfortunately discussion of this text and its themes are beyond the scope of this thesis; see Nabeel Zuberi, *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music* (Urbana: Illinois UP, 2001), p.46; Ian Glasper, *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980–1984* (Oakland: Cherry Red, 2004), p.20-21; George Berger, *The Story of Crass* (Oakland: Omnibus, 2008), p.141. Their song 'The Gasman Cometh' (1979), comparing contemporary state violence with that of Nazi Germany, also references Williams's title for *Beyond Belief's* chapter dealing with Hindley and Brady's arrest, 'The Breadman Cometh', Williams, pp. 40-51.

traditions I have identified in true-crime writing and screen media: opening with place – ‘It was just an another ordinary day in Manchester’ – it emphasises the quotidian and is filled with material detail of interiors, commodities and bodies, and the intertextual meta-portrayal of media. Indeed, despite its experimental musicality and originating artists, its deliberate impediments to straightforward coherence both lyrically and musically, and its deploying a profane juxtaposition of domesticity and gore, ‘Very Friendly’ maps closely to typical domestic and material features of true crime generally. This is in contrast with the punk artifacts I shall discuss, whose main focus is that of commodity, fame, visibility, reputation and official narratives of history and justice. The song was first recorded in 1975, but was not officially issued until *The First Annual Report* was released as an album in 2001.⁵ I will provide a close analysis of the lyrics in my ‘Reification and Commodity’ Section.



Pastcord, 1973.

Above: *Pastcord* (1973), an artwork by Throbbing Gristle’s Genesis P. Orridge, replicates the visual attributes of Hindley and Brady’s mugshots in a portrait of his parents, creating a parallel between the killers and the heteronormative ‘Mr and Mrs’ parental set.

In early 1977 Steve Strange (later of Visage) and Soo Catwoman had the idea of forming a band called The Moors Murderers. The band emerged from associations, friendships

⁵ First performed live at the Air Gallery on the 6th of July 1976. Like all their other performances, this was recorded. (A deliberate practise as an improvisational performance-art focussed band.)

and interests circulating in the punk scene of the time, and, in part from the production context of Derek Jarman's iconic punk film *Jubilee* (filmed in 1977, released in February 1978). It is worth remembering that in 1977 Lord Longford campaigned for Hindley's release, and in retaliation Brady wrote a letter to the Daily Mirror, which they published, saying that Longford's views on parole did not represent him, sparking further media attention for the case. William Whitelaw, leader of the House of Lords, had announced in 1975 that Hindley was not eligible for parole until 1985, again bringing her to media attention.⁶ *Jubilee's* character Amyl Nitrate, played by Jordan (Pamela Rooke, not Katie Price⁷), is clearly styled and shot referencing Hindley's famous mugshot:



Pamela Rooke, aka Jordan, as Amyl Nitrate in Jubilee (1978)

The potential to record and (re)create an *iconic image* of excessive and subversive femininity – and capture Jordan's physical presence – was in fact the inspiration for the film itself:

Britain's first punk film was inspired by a gay man's obsession with this provocatively dressed woman. Derek Jarman had first seen Jordan at Victoria

⁶ Ritchie, p.251-252.

⁷ 'Rooke[...] worked in the King's Road boutique run by clothes designer Vivienne Westwood and the impresario Malcolm McLaren, who managed the Sex Pistols'. Stuart Jeffries, 'A Right Royal Knees-Up.' *The Guardian*, 20 July 2007.

station and described her in his diary. "White patent boots clattering down the platform, transparent plastic miniskirt revealing a hazy pudenda. Venus T-shirt. Smudged black eye-paint, covered with a flaming blonde beehive ... the face that launched a thousand tabloids ... art history as makeup."⁸

Secured as a performer in his film, she speaks the lines:

As a child my heroine was Myra Hindley. Do you remember her? Myra's crimes, they say, were beyond belief.⁹ That was because no-one had any imagination back then. They really didn't know how to make their desires reality. They were not artists like Myra.

The description of Hindley as an artist clearly enacts exactly the kind of conflation of the figures of killer and artist that Downing identifies in *The Subject of Murder*:

a pervasive idea [...] that there is something intrinsically different, unique, and exceptional about those subjects who kill. Like artists and geniuses, murderers are considered special individuals, an ascription that serves both to render them apart from the moral majority on the one hand and, on the other, to reify, lionize, and fetishise them as "individual agents."¹⁰

As Jim Ellis identifies in his study of Jarman's films, this is also part of punk's broader characterisation of (traditional) art as obsolete and that 'real artists are those who can make their fantasies reality'. Raising a connection between Hindley and Hitler that will recur in many punk forms, Ellis describes how 'In a similar punk gesture, Hitler shows up at the end of the film claiming to be one of the greatest painters ever.'¹¹ *Jubilee's* linking function between film and music, art and fashion, history and rebellion is also a recurring feature of punk, providing a microcosmic glimpse of its porous generic and production boundaries, the fraught contestation of commodification, and the importance it places on actively foregrounding the *pre-existent and normalised* foregrounding of visibility in a non-visual medium.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A reference to the Emlin Williams book of the same name.

¹⁰ Downing, p.1.

¹¹ Jim Ellis, *Derek Jarman's Angelic Conversations* (Minneapolis, Minnesota UP, 2009), p. 51-2.

This overlap of film and music, image and text, creation and posture was to remain one of the defining features of punk's practical generic positioning, as I discuss below. This ambiguous yet highly aesthetic performative tendency is evident in the fact that there are claims that The Moors Murderers were initially conceived as a 'phantom band' – that is, an aesthetic experiment or exercise in image-crafting – whose only public engagement had been a photo session for the German magazine *Bravo*.¹² As Simon Reynolds and later Andrew Gallix discuss, the phenomenon of the 'phantom band' is akin to that of a meme or an urban legend:

In *Rip It Up and Start Again*, Simon Reynolds defines phantom bands as ones that exist “mostly as a figment of bragging and gossip”. The archetype is Liverpool's The Nova Mob which included Julian Cope, Pete Wylie and Budgie. Cope explains that they had decided to form a purely conceptual group “that didn't make music at all” but simply sat in cafés discussing imaginary songs — a practice they called “rehearsing”.¹³

After this initial photo shoot, Steve Strange decided to make the band 'real', i.e. to create musical output with it. In December 1977 the band played a benefit concert for the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) at Holland Park Comprehensive School as a support act for The Slits (whose the lead singer Ari Up was a former pupil).¹⁴ The Moors Murderers played a further and final gig at the Roxy club on the 13 January 1978.¹⁵ Other than these two gigs and the aforementioned performed 'photoshoots' (again suggesting the primacy of the visual in relation to Hindley – yet notably choosing not to replicate her image) they recorded one single, for Jet Records, in December 1977 at Pathway Studios: 'Free Hindley'. Apparently this was never pressed on vinyl; only on acetate, and the number of copies produced was extremely limited:

¹² Andrew Gallix, 'The Moors Murderers', *Andrew Gallix*, May 9, 2010, [<http://andrewgallix.com/2010/05/09/the-moors-murderers/>] [ACCESSED 03/03/16]

¹³ Ibid, 'The Fascination of Phantom Bands', *The Guardian*, 27 December 2007.

¹⁴ One has to wonder how this came about and whether anyone at the school or the NSPCC was informed beforehand what the band was called.

¹⁵ Gallix, 2010.

perhaps less than 5 acetates and 6 cassette copies in total. Since the band had by this point only played one gig, opportunities for bootlegging were sparse. As a result the song is not available to download or listen to; indeed, even at the time, most people who knew about it had never heard it. Consequently the band is subject to a great deal of mystification and obfuscation. Its instability and refusal of the traditional publicity process exacerbated this: the band was only photographed in pillowcase approximations of Klan-style hoods and improvised bin-bag pantomimes of fetish masks. It also destabilised the star-creation system of establishing reputation, instead featuring a changing line-up of members with no settled core group. Many, however, would go on to fame in the mainstream rock establishment, including Chrissie Hynde (Pretenders), Topper Headon (The Clash), Vince Ely (The Psychadelic Furs), Anthony Doughty (Transvision Vamp), Tex (X-Ray Spex) and Mark Ryan (Adam And The Ants).¹⁶

Chrissie Hynde recounts in her autobiography how, when she met Steve Strange, who had yet to adopt the stage name and was still Stephen Harrington,

he was just some kid [...] who accosted me one night in the Vortex [...] club [...] with a bunch of song lyrics written out and paper clipped together. [He ...] started singing his songs [with ...] shameless determination. [...]he songs were good too; all about underworld gangsters, Al Capone, the Krays – famous English villains, mostly – and a standout little tune called ‘Free Hindley’.¹⁷

The rest of her account focuses on herself and her media reception as resulting from involvement in the band, her existing media presence as a journalist,¹⁸ and how she

¹⁶ The latter is also the author of *The Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde As Told To Carl Jung By An Inmate Of Broadmoor Asylum* (Cardigan: Parthian, 1998).

¹⁷ Chrissie Hynde, *Reckless* (Ebury Digital, 8 September 2015)

¹⁸ Hynde also recounts how her friend Jane Suck, another NME writer like herself, accompanied her to a The Moors Murderers rehearsal. Suck had recently changed her name to Solanas after Valerie Solanas, author of the *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) (SCUM standing for ‘Society for Cutting Up Men’) and attempted murderer of Andy Warhol. This is doubly interesting because it also ties in with the intertextual and extra-textual contextual links between the songs in this chapter: Luke Haines has a song ‘Mr and Mrs Solanas’ (2001), the titular characters standing in for himself and his wife Sian Pattenden, whom he refers to as Mrs Solanas in the acknowledgements of *Post Everything* (2011), p. 245. In this book he characterises

became publically identified with Hindley in the process (the supposedly anonymous alias assigned her was Christine Hyndley):

the next week, we were in the pages of *Sounds* [...] “Chrissie Hynd, former NME journalist, and her band. [...] Steve [...] was all set to garner the notoriety for himself [but] [t]hen it got all over the tabloids.

Echoes of the gender issues surrounding the original case are discernable here regarding the tendency in media reporting to place women in the foreground of the story, at the expense of eliding their agency. They are subsumed into the mythology (the economy, in fact: the exchange value) of the news item, as a symbol – a muse, figurehead or catalyst – rather than simply as musician, simply as killer. Hynde jokes about her naivety and ignorance of the case leading to unanticipated negative reactions:

The Moors Murders had happened in the sixties, way before I arrived in London [from America], so I didn’t really appreciate the impact a song about Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, the serial child-killing couple would have, especially with a chorus imploring the public to ‘Free Hindley’.¹⁹
[...] I just wanted to play my guitar and have a laugh. But [...] in the eyes of the British public I might as well have [...] started a band called Adolf Hitler and His Girl Commandos, featuring Christina Braun singing ‘*Mein Führer* – Please Don’t Let Him Be Misunderstood’.

In her evocation of the adoption of historical trinkets of Nazism for shock value, however, she encapsulates much of punk’s shared interest in and use of both Hindley and Hitler – as well as calling to mind Hindley and Brady’s own uses of Nazi materials. She also gestures towards punk’s attempt to make morally polarised cultural symbols bear such a weight of signification that their enshrined meaning (and the processes of

himself as having cast himself (in his music) in the role of Solanas with the ‘Britart’ star Sarah Lucas as his Warhol in his ‘assassination fantasy’ (p. 104) in ‘The Death of Sarah Lucas’ from the same album (*The Oliver Twist Manifesto* (2001)), a song he says he ‘continues the art/murder theme’ of the album ‘against the backdrop of my own recent wedding’ (p.104). He lists Valerie Solanas and the SCUM Manifesto in his roll call of cultural touchpoints in *Bad Vibes* (p.66) and in his First National Pop Strike Manifesto announcement to the press in 2001 (see Luke Haines ‘Down Mikes - We’re Going On Strike’, *The Guardian*, 31 May 2001; *Post Everything* pp.109-11), which he also dramatised in song in ‘Never Work’, on *The Oliver Twist Manifesto* of the same year.

¹⁹ Recorder reviewer ‘Juicy Lucy’ said in her column ‘Like Mrs West and many others I appeal to music publishers, record shops and record buyers to have absolutely nothing to do with this sick disc. It’s too far over the top.’, *Record Mirror*, 14 January 1977.

enshrining that meaning in the first place) would collapse under the strain. Mark Sinker argues that Punk's aim was to empty out cultural signifiers, and to both identify, and intensify into destruction, their stripping from context and redeploying as use-value, until

society stops [...] being shocked by surface gestures [...]: the moment when the occasion of reaction wasn't silly kids capering in horror masks, but genuine evil, currently lurking unnamed or overlooked. [Punks] [...] wanted a world where what you wore was [...] just fashion: where how you look isn't who you are.[...] When right prevailed, these signs would pass unmarked—and until then, we lived in unreal time. Hence [...] Nazi chic; hence [...] declarations of fondness for [...] Myra Hindley [and ...] Hitler.²⁰ [...]The only acceptable function of fashion was the overthrow (for all time) of the very metaphysics of 'fashion' [.]

In other words, punk deployed the establishment's weapons against it in such ways as to recombine and defamiliarise them radically, in the attempt to destabilise official history, media hegemony, and consumer branding. So the re-writing, re-use, and reification of Hindley was an attempt first to provoke a reaction, and then, to denature that reaction. The visual trappings of punk engineered their own obsolescence and pointed towards the obsolescence of all such arbitrary categorisations.

This recalls a key argument of this thesis about celebrity and the visual. Punk was in rebellion against the identification of 'evil' with any specific set of physical, visual, or material attributes: attributes that can be located *here*, be visually identified *thus*, and as such exclude all else from the evil-identifying gaze. The genre situated itself in conflict with the implicit contention society repeats that evil looks like *this* and *this alone*, and, if it looks like this, then everything that does not look like this is good and should be free from scrutiny.²¹ Punk was at war with this consensus, and fighting fire with fire. As

²⁰ Mark Sinker, 'Concrete, so as to Self-Destruct: the Etiquette of Punk, its Habits, Rules, Values and Dilemmas', in Roger Sabin ed., *Punk Rock: So What – The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.124.

²¹ A form of spectacle again – the inverse of 'that which is good appears'.

Crass argued their band history/statement of disbanding, 'In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own' (1986): 'We have all been guilty of defining the enemy, [...] yet ultimately the enemy is us, yet there is only you and me.'²² It should also be noted that the Crass song 'Do They Owe Us A Living', which was the first track on the album in whose sleeve notes this statement was made (and from which Brian Cogan took the title of his essay about punk, industrial and politics), was based on Hindley's claim in a letter she sent upon arrival in Durham prison that 'society owes me a living' – the 'us' and replication of her statement placing the band, and punks more generally, in shared subject position and cause with Hindley.

The song 'Free Hindley' itself (as is typical of cultural representations of real crimes) both resists and retreads the – already competing and self-contradictory – establishment discourses of the case, staging an interlocking mesh of hypocrisies:

In nineteen-hundred and sixty-four
Myra Hindley was nothing more
Than a woman who fell for a man
[...]
Brady was her lover
Who told her what to do
Psychopathic killer - nothing new

Beginning with a framing focus that gives the case an (ironically exaggerated?) historical setting (the phrasing of the date making it sound old fashioned, like a story, which is undercut by its temporal proximity), the lyrics echo Hindley's own claims and those of her supporters as to her relative culpability. 'Free Hindley' also presents a spectrum of explication – from the more to the less generally acceptable aspects of Hindley's own presentation of the situation: 'What mother in her right mind | Would allow a girl at the age of nine | Be out on her own'.

²² Crass, 'In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own', sleeve note essay included with *Best Before 1984* album (1986), republished in *Black Flag*, 28th of April 1986, p. 4-5.

This is reminiscent of the fictional Hindley's line in *Evil*, 'that child should never have been allowed out at that time'. The last line also pre-echoes the words of *Evil*'s version of Smith: 'Brady's just a sex case; the king of the sex cases'. Like that drama, this song seems to offer Hindley the double-bind of simultaneously less and more responsibility: on the one hand it was Brady who, according to this narrative, wanted the crimes to happen, coercing her into taking part; but on the other hand, Hindley should have stopped him, should have known better, whereas he was somehow incapable of, or beneath, the level of behaviour expected of her. As Downing has contended, what makes Hindley culturally aberrant as a woman is her lack of appropriate victimhood (like a category error of being on the wrong side of the typical equation), and above all, not only her harm to children but her lack of caregiving to them, 'transgressi[ng ...] the cultural imperative of female nurturing'.²³ This song questions this and yet offers the possibility of excusing Hindley on equally gender-stereotypical grounds. The implication of 'nothing new' is that Brady's involvement in the case was expected, humdrum, whereas Hindley's was exceptional. Yet in explaining her involvement as an inevitable consequence of her love of Brady (even if intended ironically) – 'What she did was for love [...] She was trapped by her love' – this also offers a mundane(ly gendered) template for the case: 'nothing more | than a woman'. Though she would be the last person to want to align herself with them, the band The Moors Murderers were making the same point as Pamela Hansford Johnson in *On Iniquity*, that the 'passion' of their relationship in other circumstances could seem desirable: 'if I can raise a glimmer of sympathy [...] at all, it isn't [...] exactly for her – but for the kind of blinding passion that drove her. In another context it could have seemed classic and wonderful.'²⁴ I would suggest that Hansford Johnson is inadvertently (and The Moors Murderers knowingly)

²³ Downing, p.103.

²⁴ Hansford Johnson, Letter to Emlyn Williams, 5 June 1967, quoted Lee, p.354.

foregrounding the presentation of the case in a framework of heteronormative romance genres – and in such readings of it *as readings*. Its outward-facing placing of blame – ‘don't blame Hindley | blame yourselves’ – is typical of the moral universe these genres inhabit, and, reminiscent of The Sex Pistols's ‘No One Is Innocent’ (see below) and later The Manic Street Preachers' lyric ‘Who's responsible? | You fucking are’. Despite the seemingly ironic (or at least intentionally provocative) use of romance tropes and gender stereotypes it also dramatises a reasonable assessment of the hypocrisy of the justice system and public discourse surrounding death and abuse:

Why shouldn't she be free?
[...]
Not a glimmer of hope for parole
Although ten years have passed
Other criminals get considered
But for Myra not a chance

The band split up in 1978. Nevertheless this was an exceptionally prolific year for representations of Hindley and Brady. It seems strange to consider this, knowing that these texts were being produced at the same time that women were being killed in Yorkshire and the larger North, and the rest of the area's female inhabitants were in unofficial lockdown, due to the Yorkshire Ripper's killings and the atmosphere of fear they created – killings that in less than half a decade would provide material for yet more songs from the same genres and even some of the same bands, as this chapter goes on to examine. The Sex Pistols's ‘No One Is Innocent’, released in 1978 (June 30th) also engages with the Moors Murders case. Its title and central motif convey a sentiment reiterated in the lyric ‘everyone is guilty’ in the Manic Street Preachers' ‘Of Walking Abortion’ (1994), emphasising society's collective complicity in such crimes. The Manics song foregrounds this in relation to the Moors Murders also: lyrics paraphrasing

passages of Marquis de Sade written out by Smith under Brady's direction (an activity dramatised in *Evil*) are juxtaposed with an assertion of collective guilt:

Little people in little houses
Like maggots small blind and worthless
The massacred innocent blood stains us all
Who's responsible?
You fucking are.

Both 'Free Hindley' and the Sex Pistols' 'No-One Is Innocent' are 'writing back' against society's refusal to accept broader responsibility, and against the constructing of killers as exceptional ('Myra Hindley was nothing more | Than a woman'). Perhaps this accounts for the tendency for artists (Whitehouse, Church of Misery, The Sutcliffe Jugend, and later the Manic Street Preachers) to place killers together, into a canon, using enumeration, sets of multiple images, and roll-calls. This sets them in a mass of their own kind, within a framework of very blunt, un-allusive intertexts – as 'just a bit of information', in fact. It de-romanticises them, stripping them of the affective, fetishised detail required for the reality effect, unmooring them from the narrative of their own celebrity, their own becoming, into just one of many. Placing them in a broader context, a wave, a movement, a social phenomenon, this can re-situate them within the terrain of social crime. Just as Crass argue the enemy is 'just you and me': there is no outside of society.

No One Is Innocent featured fellow 1960s criminal celebrity Ronnie Biggs (known for his role in the 'Great Train Robbery', the armed robbery of a mail train in 1963, and his subsequent escape from prison in 1965) performing vocals, and was originally titled *Cosh The Driver* referring to the beating sustained by engine-driver Jack Mills during the robbery. The song begins each verse with the phrase 'God Save' followed by the names of various malefactors including Hindley. This meshes neatly with Jamie Reid's *God Save*

Us All series (1980), a set of visual artworks created for The Sex Pistols' mockumentary film *Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* of the same year. Biggs featured in the artwork by Reid, as well as actually appearing as himself in the film, which presented a fictional account of the formation and career trajectory of the band focusing on the central figure of their manager Malcolm McLaren. Its plot is organised around noir-ish thriller and crime-related genre tropes such as Steve Jones (the band's guitarist) playing an untrustworthy private detective investigating the band, and McLaren's nefarious plans of 'chaos' and global domination (as 'The Embezzler'). Featuring images and even cameos of real criminals in the film further complicates its already convoluted, porous and playfully ambiguous delineation of 'truth' and fiction. Reid's art functioned as both in-film art (part of its mise-en-scène) and external promotional materials, crossing boundaries of – and combining techniques from – art, DIY culture and advertising:



Above: Jamie Reid, *God Save Us All*, (1980): in-film art for *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*

(Julien Temple, 1980)

The images' cut and pasted letters, in the style of a ransom note (which Reid is credited as establishing as a canonical feature for punk art) echoes both criminal abduction strategies and the detachability of Hindley's image. The use of black and white images superimposed on highlighter-toned bright colour-washes again foregrounds that paste-ability, and emphasises the incompleteness and fixity of mythology. In this selection of images Hindley's is the only one based on a specific, official, state-mandated, iconic picture of the person themselves. One is not a person (Captain Swing), one a specific historical figure mythologised out of recognition (Dick Turpin), one a blank that has had the frame of historical figure-hood created around it (Jack the Ripper, merely represented as a shadow). Both Turpin and Jack the Ripper are represented by vague generic visualisations of their historical selves – blanks – and Peter Cook 'the Cambridge Rapist' is represented by his hood, a self-created symbol of his anonymity and power.²⁵ The only other famous criminal represented by a photograph of their face is Ronnie Biggs, who, as discussed above, was having something of a second career as punk bit-part player.

These 'historical blanks' of mythological murderers point towards the next stage of music's relation with true crime. Towards the end of the Yorkshire Ripper's killings and after his apprehension in 1981, there followed, seamlessly, another wave of true-crime songs, now centred on a new case. The first to represent the Yorkshire Ripper pre-arrest was 'Killer on the Loose' by Thin Lizzy, an Irish rock band fronted by Phil Lynott, who also wrote the song. Released as a single in September 1980 (and later in the year on their album *Chinatown*) it reached number 10 in the UK and number 5 in Ireland. It uses

²⁵ Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's 'SEX' boutique's designs played with social and sexual taboos and included t-shirts bearing images of the Cambridge Rapist's face hood.

and subverts a love song format in which the first person narrator is the killer (a narrative trope constituting a subgenre in itself), playing with the double meaning in the term ladykiller - 'There's a killer on the loose [...] | A ladykiller on the loose' - and with the possibilities of figuring sex as a violent secret: 'there's something I've got to do to you honey | And it's between you and me'. From the first lines it foregrounds the Yorkshire Ripper/Jack the Ripper comparison innate in the press nomenclature and in the unknown murderer ('Some people they call me Jack') returning to it later with a rhyme that again emphasises the sexual aspects of the case and link with sex workers: 'Don't unzip your zipper | 'Cause you know I'm Jack the Ripper'. It is unusually forthright in expressing its rape-cultural themes:

Now you might think I'm messing
Or he don't exist
But honey I'm confessing
I'm a mad sexual rapist

Not unexpectedly, the song generated considerable controversy, particularly from feminist groups understandably incensed at an apparent cash-in trivialising and rendering titillating the immediately ongoing sexual murder of women – particularly in light of the music video (directed by David Mallet), in which Lynott is dressed in a long coat and surrounded by swirling smoke, visually referencing Jack the Ripper's iconography, and is surrounded by women apparently styled as sex workers.²⁶ The video's introduction is cut with very brief still shots of several women presented in a victim/mugshot visual style, with their eyes are blanked out in the 'preservation of anonymity' tradition that, prior to digital blurring or pixilation, newspapers and television crime reporting used frequently to use for victims, witnesses and those as yet untried in court. These are intercut with a long take of Lynott's legs walking through

²⁶ Alan Byrne, *Thin Lizzy* (Wembley : Firefly, 2005), pp.166-7.

alleyways past women in revealing outfits (presumably representing sex workers) who later become his backing dancers.



The lyrics also echo a factual element of the case, in which Sutcliffe ambiguously attempted to gain a potential victim's trust (while perhaps gloating at his own secret knowledge). Lynott sings:

Now I'm not trying to be nasty
Or I'm not trying to make you scared
But there's a killer on the loose
Or haven't you heard

Tracy Browne, who in 1975 survived an attack by Sutcliffe, reported that he had said 'you can't trust anyone these days' to her immediately before assaulting her.²⁷ The song also stages a connection between music and forensics, making reference to the use of audiotape: 'Play that back | Check it back | There's a killer on the loose'. This would appear to reference Wearside Jack's tape and its broadcast in public places during the

²⁷ Una, p.33; 205; Burn, 1984, p.413; Bilton, p. 140. This testimony is also quoted in the fictionalised account the Ripper gives of his crimes in Peace, 2001, p.354, and in the indie band The Lucksmiths' song 'World Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Murder' (1997).

search for the killer, but also, the materiality of tape and the physical conditions of evidence gathering and reporting – and in the case of Wearside Jack’s perverting the course of justice, and more seriously, of Hindley and Brady recording themselves torturing, abusing and killing Lesley Ann Downey – of criminal activity itself.

For the duration of the introduction we do not see Lynott’s face or much of his body above the waist. Partly this is clearly to create suspense and delay ‘revealing’ his identity, as a way of enacting the anonymous threat of the fact that the killer is ‘on the loose’ and is as yet unknown. However, the showing of female bodies, often starting from the feet up, and avoiding the head, is frequently used as a textbook example of the ‘male gaze’ at work. Thus, here, Lynott is turning a similarly objectifying gaze upon himself, and specifically on himself figured *as a killer*.²⁸ This would seem to be another example of fetishising the killer’s body but also draws attention to the fact that it is reflexively fetishising the speaker who is performing killer-ness: i.e. fetishising his ability to don the mantle of murderer. It therefore implies that the fascination for the male artist/performer is not the idea that it is sexy to kill women, but, that it is sexy, powerful, or appealing to try on, like the Jack the Ripper costume of Lynott’s long coat, the masculinity of the men who do.

As well as the posed ‘victim’ photographs, the video is also intercut with spinning ‘this just in’ style mocked-up newspaper front pages, clearly exemplifying the kind of visual collage Derek Paget terms ‘documentary coding’ in screen contexts:

²⁸ See my ‘Pop Is Always Looking For Trouble’ section.



Thin Lizzy's video uses the same kind of Yorkshire Ripper media forensic intertext as the credits of *Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1980* (2009), and those of *Longford* (2006) with the victims of Brady and Hindley – the same visual coding that we see in materials accompanying other musical artefacts, for example, the cover of Sutcliffe Jugend's *We Spit On Your Grave* (1982) which shows a grid of black and white images of Sutcliffe's victims, from the investigation and media surrounding the case.

The first song to document the Yorkshire Ripper case, post-arrest, was Siouxsie and the Banshees' 'Night Shift', released on the album *Juju* (1981). In the re-released album's sleeve notes Mark Paytress, author of the Siouxsie biography, explains:

'Night Shift' was based on a true-life murderer. "This news journalist told me that they had a lot of information about the (Yorkshire) Ripper before he was caught," said Sioux in 1981. "I don't know how true... [it is; they said] that he was a necrophiliac, at least while he was a gravedigger, and that was why he wanted to work the night shift."²⁹

²⁹ Mark Paytress and Paul Mathur, *Siouxsie and the Banshees: The Authorised Biography* (London: Sanctuary, 2003). These timings are of note. Sutcliffe was arrested on the 2nd of January 1981 after being stopped with a sex worker and found to have car license false plates. He was later caught concealing

despite making these references to Sutcliffe, like 'Killer On the Loose', the song has a nebulous, generic quality to its depiction of him. It represents a miasmic fear, with the killer as a quasi-mythical archetype or malign folkloric force, rather than, say, a particularised fetishistic portrait of a specific celebrity killer. The featureless man in black's echoes of the Jack the Ripper myth in this representational positioning are obvious and striking, adding to the phantasmal horror of what Dave Simpson, in his retrospective *Guardian* review, called 'a chilling[...] portrait of a killer at large'. He adds 'It wasn't immediately known at the time that the song was based on the crimes of Peter Sutcliffe, aka the Yorkshire Ripper'.³⁰ There was indeed so much fan speculation as to the inspiration that Siouxsie Sioux felt the need to state definitively in a 1998 interview that 'Night Shift' was about the Yorkshire Ripper, not Bela Lugosi, or whatever.'³¹

Although Sutcliffe himself is frequently individualised and physically fetishised as a celebrity murderer, and in some ways his visual treatment is more like that of Hindley than Brady (for example, focussing on his eyes and hair) in a way that, as a male murderer, one might not immediately expect, nevertheless this 'miasmic' approach, seen in 'Night Shift', is a recurring feature of the Yorkshire Ripper mythology. The Moors Murders also exert a nebulous mesmeric 'pull' of evil (see Chapter One for examples of Gothic landscape and weather making use of this kind of 'apocalyptic metaphor' as

weapons from the police who had stopped him. He was questioned and his house and the scene of his apprehension were searched and the concealed weapons found. By the 4th of January he had confessed to being the Ripper; he was charged on the 5th. So, although he had been questioned 5 times, operational failures and the sheer surfeit of information generated by the investigation meant that his apprehension was by chance rather than as the result of any sustained investigation: in spite of any rumors, January was the first point at which he could have been known to anyone as the Ripper. Given that *JuJu* was released on June the 6th 1981, had the band been working on the song prior to January, then, they would have not known the identity of the Ripper (or, rather, possible identity of the Ripper; Sutcliffe was not sentenced until the 22nd of May).

³⁰ Dave Simpson, 'Siouxsie and the Banshees: 10 of the best', *Guardian*, 29 October 2014.

³¹ *Time Out*, 26 September 1998.

Helen Birch calls it.)³² This is reminiscent of Simpson's description of Siouxsie and the Banshees's 'haunting music' and 'mysterious, apocalyptic lyrics'.³³ As I have mentioned, Maconie considers the Moors Murders and Yorkshire Ripper cases 'the north's darkest, nastiest secrets, the source of an enduring *miasma of evil* that *swirls around* Saddleworth and Chapeltown'.³⁴ The trope of the killer as supernatural force or paranoid ambiance is an especially key feature of the Ripper's cultural meaning. This is not simply because of a general reliance on Gothic in the construction of criminal cases in the public memory (although this was clearly a contributing factor), but also due to the long period of time over which the crimes were known to be connected and were subject to a great deal of media and public attention, but the killer himself remained unknown and at large. This created a wide canvas for speculation and a pervasive atmosphere of gossip and dread. (By contrast, in the Moors Murders case their killings were not known to be connected, and so there was no pre-existing mythology setting the tone before their apprehension resulting from Smith's information.) The myth of a Gothic, excessive north is written onto the landscape, both diffusely and particularly, so that, as Hutchings argues, it becomes 'suffused with a sense of profound and sometimes apocalyptic anxiety'.³⁵ Paytrees quotes Steven Severin's locating of the 'horror' of the song in materialist and mental realms: "'*Ju ju* did have a horror theme to it, but it was psychological horror and nothing to do with ghosts and ghouls.'³⁶ Another, even more nebulous, account from a band whose music was already infused with anxiety and discomfort was 'Leeds Ripper', recorded by Throbbing Gristle in 1982.³⁷ Unlike 'Night Shift', this focuses on news

³² Birch, p.34.

³³ Dave Simpson, 2014.

³⁴ Maconie, p. 191, emphasis added.

³⁵ Hutchings, p. 29.

³⁶ Mark Paytreess, *Ju ju* linear notes (2006 re-release) (PVC Records, 1981).

³⁷ Although as usual the release process was fraught and convoluted, with a series of bootlegs and then an unofficial release in 1995. The song is a sound collage consisting of a news report over music, in this case the 5:40pm evening news on BBC1, read by Peter Woods, reporting the discovery of the body of the

reporting of the cases and conveys something of the unease created by the media backdrop in our daily lives.

Continuing the theme of meta-media presentation, in early 1982 Kevin Tomkins formed a 'power electronics' (extreme electronica/death industrial) band called Sutcliffe Jügend, (the name combining Peter Sutcliffe and the Hitler Youth or 'Hitlerjugend' in German, without an umlaut) as a side project to his main band in the same genre, Whitehouse (who presumably got their name from '70s moral conservatism crusader Mary Whitehouse). Another member of Whitehouse was controversial experimental author Peter Sotos, who wrote *Selfish Little: The Annotated Lesley Ann Downey* (2004), an uncategorisable quasi-pornographic semi-fictional account of his obsession with Hindley and Brady's victim, as well as writing the afterword for Ian Brady's book *The Gates of Janus* (2001). In 1986 he was the first US citizen convicted of possession of child pornography.³⁸ His musical input to Whitehouse includes spoken word and sound-collages of interview material of rapists, murderers and crying parents of murdered children sampled from television talk shows and news on songs such as 'Private' (1998), 'Public' (2001), and 'Bird Seed' (2003). The majority of Sutcliffe Jügend's music refers to sexual murder, serial killings, death and extreme sexual acts. They released a ten-cassette box set *We Spit on Their Graves* in 1982 on the record label Come Organisation, which was later bootlegged into a ten-LP vinyl set. The set features images of Sutcliffe and of his victims and many of the songs (largely without lyrical content) were named after them.

Yorkshire Ripper's 12th victim Barbara Leach over electronic beats, looped vocalisation and abrupt distorted synths, resulting in a tense unsettling atmosphere. See also The Manic Street Preachers' 'Archives of Pain' (1994), which also sampled this news report. Due to the constraints of brevity, however, further discussion of these songs is beyond the scope of this thesis.

³⁸ Michael Salter, *Organised Sexual Abuse* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), p. 55-6.



The tapes are each named after a different victim with commentary in brackets, such as 'Irene Richardson (Hammer Deaths)', Yvonne Peason (Sex Attack 2)' and 'Patricia Atkinson (Ejaculation Centre)'. As discussed above and in Chapter Two, this intertextual use of forensic media turns those killed by Sutcliffe into iconography, into matter and information, to be used.³⁹ However, it also highlights the fact that they have already undergone this process through the news media and indeed the police investigative

³⁹ The replication of their images we see here is very different from the humanising way in which, say, Una's *Becoming Unbecoming* (2015) re-creates their images in order to confront and replace the celebrity fetishisation of their killer with a foregrounding of them as people and as important, accomplishing is the opposite of the marooning from history – or ossification of history – that occurs from these mugshots and media images.

procedure: individuals and their suffering are turned into objects and ciphers: pictures, file cards, indexes, and in turn, newspapers and their images, highlighting the proliferation process by exaggeration and distortion.

1980s – Present day: Indie

After the initial surge of punk and industrial representations from the mid-seventies to the early eighties, the songs depicting these killers became less frequent and also interconnected. The genres providing true-crime music of these cases also shifted, with Indie becoming the chief proponent. When writing about this genre of music the historical flow is less obvious and immediately relevant, so to discuss songs that emerged after the early 1980s I will abandon the chronological format I have employed thus far, instead dividing them into thematic groups, referring back in more detail to earlier related songs historicised above.

Just after the Yorkshire Ripper representations had abated, in February 1984 The Smiths released their now iconic song ‘Suffer Little Children’, about the Moors Murders (based on Emlyn Williams’s *Beyond Belief*, one of singer Stephen Morrissey’s favourite books at the time) as the B-side to ‘Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now’.⁴⁰ As Ed Glinert suggests, the title derives direction from a passage in the true-crime novel where

Williams describes how women at Holloway prison spat the words ‘Suffer Little Children’ [...] taken from the Bible’s Mark 10:14 (‘Suffer the little children for come unto me . . .’) [...] at [...] Hindley when she was first jailed.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Simon Goddard, *Mozipedia: The Encyclopaedia of Morrissey and The Smiths* (Bodmin: Ebury, 2009), p.31-2. Goddard also posits that it was his reading of this book that prompted the naming of the band, after Maureen and David Smith, the sister and brother-in-law of Hindley who are often referred to collectively in it as ‘the Smiths’. The song also appeared on the band’s self-titled album later the same year.

⁴¹ Ed Glinert, *The Manchester Compendium: A Street-by-Street History of England’s Greatest Industrial City* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp.86-7.

Glinert describes how

Morrissey once explained to journalists puzzled at his obsession with the murders, when he was at school in the 1960s he genuinely feared that he might become a victim – as doubtless did many of his contemporaries.

David Peace also speaks of a similar situation of fear in his own childhood in relation to the Yorkshire Ripper case: 'at school we'd compare our dads to [...] the photofits'; 'I genuinely feared that my father could be the Ripper - the notion that he had to be "somebody's husband, somebody's son", [...] somebody's father', making reference to Burn's true-crime novel of that name. He describes his sister's worries about their mother's safety, 'say[ing] her prayers out loud every night, [...] she would always say, "Dear God, please don't let the Ripper kill my mum"'.⁴² However, despite the real fear which Morrissey no doubt felt, he still could not help describing this atmosphere of fear in terms that explicitly turn it into entertainment, 'It was like living in a soap opera'.⁴³ This echoes Birch's description of Williams's 'Gothic soap opera'; a point which I have used to develop the idea that these cases have their own specific iconographies and constitute discrete genres unto themselves.

'Suffer Little Children' has eclipsed most of the other songs in this chapter to become one of the most famous songs about murder, and certainly the most famous about this case. Two incidents contributed to this. Firstly it was released on May 21st 1984, the year before a decision on Hindley's parole was due to be announced, whereupon Brady wrote a series of letters to journalists and to the BBC claiming his desire never to be considered for parole.⁴⁴ Following this Brady allowed *Sunday People* journalist Fred

⁴² David Peace, 'On The Red Riding Quartet', *Crime Time* [www.crimetime.co.uk/features/davidpeace.php] [ACCESSED: 02/09/2016]; Nick Hasted, 'The Shadow of the Ripper', *The Guardian*, 2 August 2001.

⁴³ Glinert, p87.

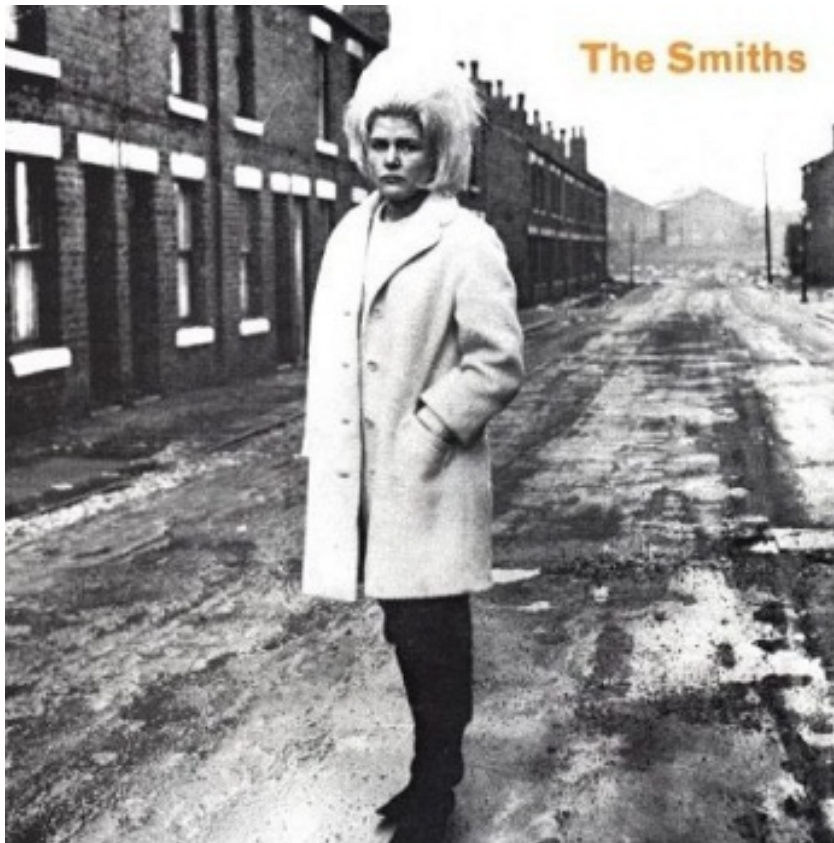
⁴⁴ Ritchie, p.252.

Harrison to visit and interview him several times over the summer, allegedly confessing that he and Hindley had also been responsible for the murders of Pauline Reade and Keith Bennett, prompting the Greater Manchester Police to reopen the case.⁴⁵ This placed Hindley and Brady in public and media focus once again, presumably garnering 'Suffer Little Children' more attention than it might otherwise have received. The second factor was that not long after its release John Kilbride's grandfather heard the song on a pub jukebox and complained to the local press.⁴⁶ The story was taken up by *The Sun*, 'resulting in high street chains such as Woolworths temporarily removing the album from sale'.⁴⁷ Morrissey undermines his own professions of concern with the remark, 'I'm glad the record got attention, ultimately' – which Chris Morris satirises in a clear-cut reference in *Brass Eye*'s 1997 'Decline' episode (discussed below).

⁴⁵ Topping, p. 10

⁴⁶ Simon Goddard, p.428-30.

⁴⁷ Ibid. There were similar calls to boycott The Moors Murderers' 'Free Hindley', *Record Mirror*, 14th January 1977) which seems superfluous given the virtual non-existence of any copies to buy, the unlikelihood of any major record label being willing to produce any, or of the band cooperating had this been the case.



The cover of the single on which the song was a B-side (above) featured a picture of Viv Nicholson, a working-class Yorkshire housewife who became famous in 1961 for the having won the football pools and become the equivalent of a millionaire by today's standards. According to Mick Middles, some newspapers claimed the picture was intended to resemble Myra Hindley.⁴⁸ This seems likely, and indeed, Nicholson in this image is widely mistaken for Hindley to this day, even by researchers. She is not merely seen as similar in appearance and setting to Hindley, but read *as* Hindley, that is, as a direct stand-in for her. The band's use of Nicholson is therefore yet another example of the true crime 'placeholder' trope, in which another item, person, etc., is used as a stand-in, indirectly meant to represent the killer or the crime. Hindley's image's availability for such a use – and the ubiquity with which Nicholson is read as her – indicates the

⁴⁸ Mick Middles, *The Smiths: The Complete Story* (New York: Omnibus, 1986), p.12. Strangely, Ward Jouve also made the same claim in *The Street Cleaner* about newspapers' use of images of Peter Sutcliffe's sister in coverage of the Ripper case.

semiotic doubling encapsulating the linked but free-hanging strands of Hindley-as-emblem. Firstly, the impersonality and detachability of her recognisable traits enables others to be read as her, secondly, the markers of her specific socio-cultural moment (that lock her in that place and time, e.g. fashion, class, culture), and, finally, her pollutant role, which transforms specific other people *and* cultural moments *and* stereotypes *all* into her. She becomes the dominant symbol replacing and yet emblematising specifics. Hindley and Nicholson's similar social backgrounds and their visual similarity (partly as resulting from that social and temporal setting), allows the use of Nicholson *as a place-holder for* Hindley to specifically foreground tropes of representation of the working-class North. This underlines the paradoxical universality and specificity of Hindley's image in popular consciousness, indicating how the semiotic intersects with the socio-historical, a process operating on multiple levels: at the surface, her image may be invoked for humorous or otherwise rational reasons, yet such invocation taps into the resonance and conflict of a larger collective mythology and constitutes part of a compulsive cultural return to a site of trauma. These images become referential to Hindley by dint of their being experienced as such: her image is so powerful that other images are re-categorised in relation to it. Her image belongs to us all and as such is available as template, as text, and as vocabulary.

This use places Hindley and Nicholson in the same visual milieu, interchangeable props against the same backdrop, in the same iconography – of mid-twentieth-century working-class Northern-ness and Manchester-ness, of excessive femininity and excessive romance, and of the kind of tough glamour of the contemporary fashionable look that encompasses both the 'gaudy barbarism' of elite fears at the time and also the aspirational fashion and image-making finally trickling down to a newly relatively

affluent working-class. Morrissey has repeatedly re-used Nicholson's narrative and visuality, linking and interweaving them with Hindley's. This co-opting of their materiality is using *people* as props (a form of both fetishism and reification). The use of the image also functions very much like the opening to *Beyond Belief*, or any of the typical 'figures in a landscape' openings analysed in Chapter One, in which generically othered people plus landscape equals scene-setting. It also has a framing function, like that textual scene setting's use of visual materiality – placing the narrative in time, space and genre. Thus it also functions like the credits to screen media. Indeed, the song itself, as well as its visual accompaniment, is reminiscent of the credit sequence in *Longford*: in sound and image it is lyrical, New Wave-esque, maudlin, in combination with the visual depiction of the street on the cover in misty shades of grey; the physical appearance of Nicholson, etc. And *like* the credits of true-crime screen texts, these true-crime songs are prefaced and outro'ed by forensic/media images, either directly from or of these cases (Sutcliffe Jugend, for example), by posed mock-ups thereof (Thin Lizzy), or by self-conscious placeholders such as The Smiths' use of Nicholson.

Morrissey brought into view the links between the Moors Murders myth/story and the British New Wave by placing Hindley alongside British playwright Shelagh Delaney in his referential canon. Mark Simpson makes this link, comparing Hindley and Brady to the protagonists of *A Taste of Honey*, a famous New Wave play (Shelagh Delaney, 1959) and film adaptation (Tony Richardson, 1961): 'There is a slight, eerie premonition of Myra and Brady in this odd, outsider relationship, but with pathos instead of bloodlust, impossible desire instead of evil.'⁴⁹ Main characters Jo and Geoff's day out on the moors in *A Taste of Honey*, the scene in which Jo throws the baby doll and threatens to kill it,

⁴⁹ Mark Simpson, *Saint Morrissey: A Portrait of This Charming Man by an Alarming Fan* (New York: Touchstone, 2005), p.57; p.60.

the presence of children throughout, and in the film version of children's voices and songs in the soundtrack, all contribute to the cultural intelligibility of the murders through the prism of this film. Simpson's connection gestures revealingly towards public consumption of true crime and other representations of the case like cinema-goers watching a grittier version of *A Taste of Honey*. A similar suggestion is implicit in Williams's mention of Dracula's gore-soaked coffin on the film poster outside the cinema in his opening passage of *Beyond Belief*. In consuming their myth we consume the genre and iconography of a noir/New Wave cross over: a physical impossibility of seeing the hard polarised black and white of noir at the same time as the soft gauzy greys of New Wave cinematography: exactly the kind of 'Gothic soap opera' crossover Helen Birch proposes. Yet, in making Hindley and Brady into monsters or genre villains we insert a level of distance that allows us to disconnect from their victims, turning them instead into plot points: mythical lost children, equally unreal, merely figures in an imaginary working-class landscape in an imagined North in the imagined 1960s.

The offbeat almost-romance of the New Wave and its 'outsider relationship[s]' recalls the way in which Hansford Johnson saw Myra Hindley's story, in genre terms, as 'almost' belonging to the tropes of romantic fiction.⁵⁰ Morrissey's conflation of Viv Nicholson and Hindley's experiences of romance in the song 'Still Ill' (also from the self-titled album, 1984, so written contemporaneously with 'Suffer Little Children') performs a similar function. 'Still Ill' contains paraphrased quotations from the two women: 'I decree today that life is simply taking and not giving | England is mine; it owes me a living' is based on Hindley's claim that 'society owes me a living'. Nicholson herself provides the immediate source for 'under the iron bridge we kissed | and although I ended up with sore lips | it

⁵⁰ Hansford Johnson, letter to Emlyn Williams, 5th June 1967, quoted Lee, p.354.

just wasn't like the old days anymore', having described her early relationship with her husband in her autobiography: 'we walked [...] over the iron bridge and down underneath it [...] kissing away and touching and getting really sore lips from biting one another'.⁵¹ Yet it is also one of a number of references to the Moors Murders case scattered throughout Morrissey's work. For, as Glinert argues, 'the seemingly innocent 'I Don't Owe You Anything' (the song immediately preceding 'Suffer Little Children' on The Smiths's debut album, which also contained 'Still Ill') 'is little more than a well-concealed account of the murderers' early romance'.⁵² It is notable then that, once again, the prism through which Morrissey views the case is that of the love story genre.

How I Love The Romance Of Crime

The recurring tendency for a romance template to be available to the Moors Murders myth is particularly apparent in both popular music itself, in its use of visual materials, and in other texts' *uses of* popular music, as outlined in Chapters One and Two. Partly, this relates to the love song being a generic cornerstone of popular music.

An odd but revealing example of both this use of people as props, and of the romance narrative framework as an important and embedded aspect of the way in which the Moors Murders myth is perceived – as well as an interesting twist on the 'placeholder' trope – is the fact that the cover of Sonic Youth's 1990 album *Goo* featured a drawing of a press photograph of Maureen and David Smith (the original was taken by a newspaper photographer outside Chester Assizes during the Moors Murders trial) by illustrator

⁵¹ Vivian Nicholson, *Spend Spend Spend* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), quoted Goddard, p. 418.

⁵² Glinert, p. 187.

Raymond Pettibon. The drawing is accompanied by the text 'I stole my sister's boyfriend. It was all whirlwind heat and flash within a week we killed my parents and hit the road', re-situating them (or their image) as teen runaways, thrill killers, swept up in a destructive 'bad romance', turning them into stock figures from a conventional 'romance and rebellion' narrative.



The idea of Maureen Hindley stealing her 'sister's boyfriend' – running away with Ian Brady – is shockingly real compared to the generic, superfluous nature of the thumbnail sketch narrative of murder and passion provided by the album sleeve, reminiscent of Oliver Stone's influential and critically astute killer-couple epic *Natural Born Killers* (1994), which enacts a self-aware postmodern pastiche of the kinds of tropes and media strategies accruing to such figures and whose title Schmid adapted for his work on celebrity culture and murder, *Natural Born Celebrities*.



This is a media intertext in which the original image (above left) has been repeatedly reproduced until it has become a discrete iconographic commodity. It has passed from the newspapers' interest in the case, to a touchstone in true crime representation (right image: *Evil*, 2006) to a representation of extreme romance and edginess (*Goo*, 1990), to an unmoored pop cultural trinket so divorced from its original, quasi-forensic media context that it has now been parodied for a Taylor Swift t-shirt:



Swift's parodic intertextual homage has in turn been replicated by hundreds of other pop-cultural artefacts, particularly online, transforming an image originating from the Moors Murders case into the ultimate detachable signifier:⁵³



Above: examples of the trope applied to Courtney Love and Kurt Cobain (left) and Princess Leia and Han Solo from Star Wars (right).

The influences of the 'romance and rebellion' tradition, disconnected from the immediate facts of the case, are apparent in the 2008 song by The Rotted (a death metal hardcore and punk influenced band), 'Kissing You With My Fists', released during another boom in Moors Murderers representations, in this instance the wave of specifically visual representations of Hindley's famous custodial image in the 2000s following her death renewing media interest in her in 2001. The expression 'kiss with a fist' means beating – the romance element is transposed into violence, but the link

⁵³ See: Perpetua, Matthew, '12 Parodies of Sonic Youth's Goo Album Cover' *Buzzfeed*, 17 December 2012, [https://www.buzzfeed.com/perpetua/12-parodies-of-sonic-youths-goo-album-cover?utm_term=.phB17nqNXr#.mxkg4XwQyD] [ACCESSED 02/11/16]; Murphy, Finn, 'Sonic Youth Mashups', 28 August 2013, [http://www.dontpaniconline.com/magazine/radar/sonic-youth-mashups], [ACCESSED 02/11/16]; [http://oh-the-humanatee.deviantart.com/art/Sonic-Love-and-Youth-Rockets-106305942] [ACCESSED 02/11/16]; and indeed an entire tumblr dedicated solely to this, [http://goomashups.tumblr.com] [ACCESSED 02/11/16]. For compilations of examples of this phenomenon – and of course, the band Whirlwind Heat are named after the wording on the cover.

revealing their connection in cultural imagination remains. In a popular music format it cannot help but act as referent to both love songs and to the disturbing acquiescence to domestic violence and partner abuse in pop culture's rape culture. The most direct referent to the chorus is the 1962 girl-pop chart hit, 'He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss)' written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King for The Crystals for Phil Spector, based on the domestic abuse suffered by their acquaintance, the singer Little Eva.⁵⁴ The Rotted's song also makes direct intertextual reference to Throbbing Gristle and names some of their songs, treating the killers it mentions as if they were texts on a reading list:

starts to spread
subliminal messages infect my head
'Songs of Weeping' and 'The Hamburger Lady'
and Myra Hindley and Ian Brady
Throbbing Gristle will make me assault mankind
an audio weapon, a hate intensified.

In this representation they have no materiality, no reality; there is no sense of them as anything other than cultural nodes: 'only information' as Throbbing Gristle themselves put it. As is apparent from this quotation, the text very much foregrounds the idea of information as a cultural virus, and specifically, of true-crime materials as polluting ('spread', 'infect'), and as inspiring dangerous behaviour and desires, corrupting those who listen ('it's them to blame, not me'; 'spurred on by these sounds'). This echoes the way that (as discussed in Chapter One) arguments were made about the effects of de Sade, pornography, and violent materials on Brady and Hindley themselves at the trial and in subsequent media and intellectual discourses. The libidinal and titillating elements ascribed to true-crime accounts is hinted at in the multiple meaning of 'This is where I get off | Leaving behind my fantasy of those who get the chop | Of kissing you with my fists'. While the phrase is in some respects literal (the protagonist is exiting a

⁵⁴ Dave Thompson, song review, *All Music* website, [<http://www.allmusic.com/song/he-hit-me-and-it-felt-like-a-kiss-mt0002113216>], [ACCESSED 06/04/16].

train), it also conveys the vernacular for achieving a sexual or otherwise pleasurable frisson. In disembarking the tube train in which he has been fantasising, the song's narrator is enacting exactly the kind of projection of eroticism onto a humdrum urban capitalist landscape through the consumption of, and imaginary derived from, crime reportage and true-crime that Stewart described as key to the pleasure and popularity of these genres.⁵⁵ 'Kissing You With My Fists' neatly encapsulates the troubling, fraught, and yet sometimes resistant and reclaiming overlapping combination of violence with sex, abuse with generic romance conventions.

Reification and Commodity

Of the kinds of media this thesis examines, music especially draws attention to itself as both commodity and as commodifying agent. (Such self-aware self-referentiality is also evident, for example, in Williams's 'pimp and professor' end of pier act in *Beyond Belief* (see Chapter One); and meta-media representation in 'Red Riding' and *Evil* (Chapter Two). Pop, however, grounds itself as a commodity to make a point about commodity culture and about these killers as commodities within that culture. Its focus on ideas of authenticity involves a hyper-awareness of the possibilities, formats and opportunities of 'selling out', often encoded into texts that are in no danger of achieving the kind of mainstream commercial success that would justify such anxiety. Yet this is precisely the point; as Simpson adduces in the case of Jarman's *Jubilee*: '[he] tried to depict [...] how everybody gets corrupted - even punks posturing as iconoclasts who would never sell

⁵⁵ And that Williams depicts Brady as engaged in his navigation of Manchester under the influence of *The Third Man*.

out.⁵⁶ In a true-crime context such a focus relates intimately to both issues of exploitative or unethical uses of material relating to real-life suffering and death, and also, to the concept of complicity — one that all these texts are to a greater or lesser extent engaged in negotiating. Popular musical representations of these cases illuminate how pop culture has responded to and shaped the figure of the celebrity criminal in general and the mythology surrounding these crimes specifically. Moreover, such music questions official history and the designations of 'exceptional' and 'unexceptional' violence by the way it constructs the quotidian. Its *use* of people as objects, and their exchange as such, are key to this.

Throbbing Gristle's 'Very Friendly' (1975) recounts the murder of Edward Evans by Hindley and Brady. While *The Rotted* and the images derivating from the media image of Dave and Maureen Smith enact exactly the kind of selling-out that Jarman's film mentions, nevertheless musical true-crime can also function as a means of drawing attention to this very process of turning people into 'information' – precisely 'Very Friendly's' project. It begins with the classic true crime place and time opener, and the initial lines are reminiscent of the opening passage of *Beyond Belief*, conveying a swooping panoramic view of streets, shops, cinemas and people:

It was just another ordinary day in Manchester.
Ian Brady and Myra Hindley
Drinking German wine
Their mother had gone to bed upstairs

Rather than the exterior materiality – the hustle and bustle – of the daytime street, this is the intimacy of the couple alone together; a 'night shift' into a different way of seeing them reminiscent of *Myra Beyond Saddleworth's* domestic memories.⁵⁷ Strikingly,

⁵⁶ Jeffries, 2007.

⁵⁷ See Chapter One.

however, the song dislocates their relationship, positioning them as siblings, like in a fairy story. It states that ‘*their* mother had gone to bed’, rather than, as would be factually accurate, Hindley’s grandmother, who lived with them, and whom Brady allegedly drugged so that she would sleep through activities they did not wish to be overheard. This creates a sense of twisted hidden family life, both of Hindley and Brady as perverting ‘normal’ relationships and roles, but also, of those same relationships and roles as always having contained and inherently been made from their dark apparent inverses. Simpson draws a similar point about this relation in the work of Morrissey: the Moors Murderers both symbolising and destroying

humdrum, dysfunctional, strangulated Manchester family life [...] smudg[ing] the [...] line between the murderers and adult society in general [...] Their [...] destruction of other people’s children struck at the very heart of Manchester society by assaulting the twin consoling myths of childhood innocence and the unassailable goodness of the family.⁵⁸

This inconsistency of accuracy is typical of the song’s minutely detailed yet vague, rambling, affectlessly mundane style, mixing accurate and inaccurate details. The clue to understanding their intention come in the lyrics themselves, describing both Hindley and Brady’s callousness and the project of both media commentators and makers of cultural artefacts including themselves: ‘it’s only a game. It’s only information.’ Seltzer describes the ‘technologis[t ...] esotercisim’ of the terrorist cult Aum Shinrikyo as attempts to ‘develop [...] a “mode of communication without any [external] medium” or, more exactly, the “*infomationalization of the body*” [...] such that *the body is in effect nothing but an externalization of the media*.’⁵⁹ (my emphasis). Throbbing Gristle are enaged in exactly this process within this song. Seltzer defines ‘the intensified turn of

⁵⁸ Mark Simpson, p.44. Relatedly, on the same Throbbing Gristle bootleg album as ‘Leeds Ripper’ is ‘A Debris of Murder’, in dialogue with their other murder songs. The critique of the family in this context is obvious: ‘Where is home now? | Who is your family? | Are they good?’

⁵⁹ Seltzer, 2007, p.6.

interiors, bodies and acts into communication' as the foremost integral part of true crime, and the song certainly conforms to this metric.

Throbbing Gristle's account dramatises brutal imagined details of the killing itself in spoken word:

there was Ian Brady chopping Edward Evans's head with an axe. And he was chopping, and chopping, and the axe was going into the back of his neck, and there was blood spurting over the Church Of England prayer book, and a few drops landed on the TV screen and ran down Eamonn Andrews's cheek, as some bits of bone and white brain landed on the hearth right near the brass brush that they used to clean the chimney. And there was lino on the floor, which was lucky. And it took quite a few hits before Edward Evans gargled. Ian Brady asked David Smith for some rope which he had wrapped around a stick that he used to play with his dog, and they put it tight around Edward Evans's neck until he strangled. And he made a strange noise 'Aaaargh!' And then he died. And he was just a lump of stuff. Just a bit more information.

The lyrics juxtapose the transmission of information (e.g. the prayer book and the 'This Is Your Life') with the abject horror and disgust of broken body parts and the agony of dying. The physicality of dying is in turn juxtaposed with the cosy domesticity conveyed by the brass brush, the stick used as a toy for a pet. Strikingly capturing the violence of such a killing, at the same time its excess and polluted clash of categories of material, genres of cultural product, and emotional tones render it bleakly comedic, exaggerating banality into absurdity. Thus the song dramatises reification's trick: the cruel incoherence of turning human life and human remains into just another kind of dirt to be tidied away, dramatising the turning of murder into yet another fusion of labour and leisure that precisely characterises the cultural landscape of these accounts.

It is reminiscent of the same incident's dramatised scene in *Evil*, in which, like the blood on the smiling television presenter's screen face, or the 'bits of bone and white brain [that] landed on the hearth right near the brass brush that they used to clean the

chimney', the human and the inhumane, the 'debris of murder' (to use the title of another Throbbing Gristle song) and the everyday activities of tea and cleaning, are uncleanly mingled. It renders murder, in the abstract, an uncanny pollutant, but, in the concrete, a set of physical remnants horrific in their prosaic intrusion. The blood and tea scene is also doing this: 'they made me clean up, I had to kneel in it' 'have a ciggie, drink some tea'; the labour and leisure of murder, in its absurdity and disgust, is minutely encapsulated and embodied by (Peake's portrayal of) Myra's eyes aflame with excitement as she sets to work on Evans's remains with mop and rubber gloves, an uncanny inverse of the earlier conversation about the work of furnishing that same room with 'rugs accessories and so forth'. Evans has since been grotesquely transformed not only into 'just a lump of stuff' but also a dirty job that somebody has to do.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas argued in her 1966 book *Purity and Danger* that that which we culturally designate as 'dirt' is simply 'matter out of place',⁶⁰ and yet, as Julia Kristeva theorised in 'Powers of Horror' (1982) it is these categories (of matter and its proper place) that form the indexical foundation of the abject, the other, disgust, disavowal, and of basic bodily mapping and understanding:

Through frustrations and prohibitions, this authority shapes the body into a *territory* having areas, orifices, points and lines, surfaces and hollows, where the archaic power of mastery and neglect, of the differentiation of proper-clean and improper- dirty, possible and impossible⁶¹

Turning some (types of) people's bodies and lives into simply dirt – matter – is not merely violent physically but also politically; an act of power.⁶² As I explain in the next

⁶⁰ Based on Lord Chesterfield's original definition.

⁶¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1980 [1982 edition]), p. 72.

⁶² See both David Wilson, *Serial Killers: Hunting Britons and Their Victims, 1960-2006* (Winchester: Waterside Press, 2007) on the kinds of people who become – who are made into – victims of serial killers,

section, Luke Haines's song 'Leeds United' also symbolically uses dirt to signal this reification: 'when I get home my wife will kill me | she's so house-proud | so don't tread dirt into the carpet'. Both songs, with the image of sweeping and carpets (and also Ward Jouve's naming of Sutcliffe as *The Street Cleaner*) imply repressed knowledge, the cover up, the socially-agreed-upon lie: brushing things under the carpet. It is precisely this kind of tidying up that Throbbing Gristle refuse. These texts enact the dominant discursive trend of late capitalism - a specifically political and material return of the repressed. That is, not so much a return of desires or fears we have brushed aside as unpalatable, but an embodied and emplaced return, an appalling vista of both land and flesh. It returns disturbingly to view the concrete fact of the destruction of certain kinds of bodies and lives as having been not only tolerated and accepted in our culture but the foundation upon which it was built, the grease that turned its wheels, its very lifeblood, all along. 'Very Friendly' puts the listener into the frame, with a reminder of our own complicity. The reference to the TV programme 'This Is Your Life' is also speaking to the audience: your life is also made up of this, you too are matter, and are reliant on treating others as matter also: this ugliness is your ugliness. We see this sentiment reiterated in the Manic Street Preachers' 'Who's responsible? | You fucking are', the Sex Pistols' 'No-One Is Innocent', and Crass' sleeve note announcement 'In Which': 'ultimately the enemy is us, yet there is only you and me'.

Even the band's name itself, Throbbing Gristle, relates to reification, suggestive as it is of the human condition as that of being feeling matter, or, 'animated meat'.⁶³ The phrase 'Throbbing Gristle' is a Yorkshire slang term for an erect penis, and, as Reed posits, such

and John Scanlan, *On Garbage* (London: Reaktion, 2004) on the moral and murderous implications of treating people as dirt.

⁶³ As The Paper Chase's 'If Nobody Moves Nobody Will Get Hurt' puts it.

references were commonplace in this and related genres, describing 'Industrial music's phallocentricism' as bordering on 'sexual intimidation', listing Throbbing Gristle and other phallically named acts including 'Meatwhistle, [...] Surgical Penis Klinik, and [...] Revolting Cocks'.⁶⁴ 'The Sex Pistols' is also a violently phallic image, a portmanteau sexual/bodily weapon. However, in addition to any aggression implied by these names, they also predominantly foreground the sexual body as meat ('Meatwhistle', 'Gristle'), as matter, as susceptible to injury/illness, to medical interaction ('surgical' 'Klinik' (Clinic)), bringing together sex, meat and injury in a way familiar from Chapter Two's discussion of 'women are for frying bacon and screwing', men having earrings ripped out, and so forth. Throbbing Gristle in fact made a point of literally and graphically foregrounding these issues: their live performances were notorious for their transgressive and extreme physical elements that Reed calls 'a radical exercise in revulsion'. They certainly disrupted bodily categorisation:

Genesis takes another syringe of blood from his testicles and injects in back into his forearm. He does this repeatedly, also injecting a total of seven black eggs with his own blood. He is stood [sic] on a square of sharp black nails and ice. [...] Genesis fills a spinal syringe with milk, another with blood. He takes each in turn and injects all their contents in turn up his anus. He pisses into a large glass [...] he farts and blood mingled with milk shoots out [...] [fellow band member] Cosey slithers through all the liquid towards him, lapping it up[.]⁶⁵

In one interview, Genesis P-Orridge describes a very literal form of the disruption of bodily and material boundaries between categories of sex, meat, death and injury that I have described occurring in their work textually. He relates a typical performance in which he bodily enacts this collapsing of culturally separate and strictly policed areas: 'I

⁶⁴ Reed, p.175.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,p.74.

used to [...] stick severed chicken's heads over my penis, and then try to masturbate them, whilst pouring maggots all over it'.⁶⁶

The end point of bodies as matter, in the logic of the song, and indeed, in the logic of reification, is the ultimate transferrable product: 'it was only information'. We see this process also in *From Hell* in which the real Jack the Ripper, seeing a vision of the future in which he glimpses Sutcliffe, Hindley and Brady, asks 'Am I, without a body, naught myself but information[?]'. He pictures history as depriving him of the very things of which he has deprived his victims: not only a body and a life, but also the possibility of shaping or controlling their own narrative or legacy. Like them, he finds he cannot control the uses to which he is put. As Harvey's infamous painting *Myra* makes manifest, the meaning of the image and reputation of the killer are cut off from their physical or actual self. Instead, their representations form an accrued scurf of mediated meanings and projected attributes *moulded into the shape of that physical self*. Through their bodies each killer or victim is petrified into a pose which in turn is atomised and resold and remade and proliferates, each deployment one of many tiny pieces which together make a whole picture over which they have no control, much like the handprints on Harvey's painting. In this atomised flow from the lived to the forensic to the media to the final amalgamation of all three in fictionalised meta-representational cultural products selection and distortion takes place at each switching point. The foregrounded meta-media representation is something that we also see in 'Very Friendly's' quotidian setting, both in the mention of television at the scene of the crime and in the police response, uniting both in a matrix of popular cultural consumption:

⁶⁶ Dennis Cooper, 'Sypha presents ... Music From The Death Factory: A Throbbing Gristle Primer: Part 1', *DC*, 03/02/12. [<http://denniscooper-theweaklings.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/sypha-presents-music-from-death-factory.html>][ACCESSED 06/04/16].

‘the [...] police sergeant who was trying to finish checking his football news heard the phone ring, and he said "Oh, shit!" and he put down his paper with a coronation picture of the queen on it’

The everyday is furnished through material media artefacts, sketching in time and milieu,⁶⁷ but here ‘Very Friendly’ subverts that straightforward use of media texts to indicate time period, perhaps, because the coronation was in 1953. It is not unlikely the papers would use an old picture of the queen (as they typically do with Hindley), especially an image from such a significant public and official celebration, but its inclusion also signals the disjointed refusal to play by the rules of performing authenticity, of constructing truth-effects, in true crime.

Pop Is Always Looking For Trouble

The ‘Decline’ episode of *Brass Eye*, a satirical mock-news television programme written by and starring Chris Morris, pastiches a media obsessed with portraying the world through a conservative lens of moral and social decline, and that media’s resultant prurience over, and policing of, sexual desires, identities and practices. This takes the form of several different sketches, each alluding in a television news format to different genres of popular culture.⁶⁸ One is a report on controversy surrounding *Sutcliffe!*, a fictional West End musical about his life and crimes, starring the killer himself.⁶⁹ The report features a snippet of ‘him’ singing the words ‘and I really am so very truly sorry’ in a recognisably Yorkshire accent on a stage set of night-time terraced Leeds streets:

⁶⁷ I discuss this procedure further in the next section. A similar process is at work in *Started Early Took My Dog* and the ‘Red Riding’ novels, as discussed in Chapter One.

⁶⁸ Of which, of course, news itself is also one.

⁶⁹ Its style, title and poster all clearly reference ‘Oliver!’, the popular long-running musical which premiered at the West End in 1960 by Lionel Bart based on *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens (published in book form 1838), about an orphaned child who lives in a workhouse before being sold into an apprenticeship with an undertaker before being recruited into a pickpocketing gang in a story featuring child labour, child prostitution, domestic violence and murder.



Another sketch, which I analyse below in more detail, purports to present the furore around a sexually-loaded love song to Myra Hindley (but, as with the media material it mocks, the focus is upon the song itself). All of these are located in ‘lowbrow’ apparently frivolous, unserious entertainment genres, dramatising the marketing of these criminals as literal entertainment commodities – in both their news and musical contexts. Morris thus questions the kinds of art we allow to discuss murder and those that society reviles, confronting society’s hypocrisy surrounding that which it wishes to simultaneously consume and condemn.

This sketch presents the song ‘Me Oh Myra’ by fictional band ‘Blouse’, led by ‘Purvis Grundy’, a bendy, bespectacled, polyester-attired Northerner – a humorous rendering of Pulp and their frontman Jarvis Cocker. The sequence is thus doubly parodic: firstly of Pulp and particularly Cocker’s public image as preoccupied with (representing — both in themselves and in their art — certain kinds of) sex and, secondly, of cultural boundaries governing the representation of controversial, criminal figures such as Hindley in pop-cultural forms. ‘Me Oh Myra’ satirises (as an example so extreme as to be ridiculous) popular culture’s obsession with ‘edginess’ and moral ambivalence, yet it must replicate that ambivalence, even as it critiques its presence in existing generic forms and challenges its presence in conventional reactions to this.



While Pulp have never written, performed or released a song about Myra Hindley,⁷⁰ we can directly trace their use by Morris (who in this scene also plays both the faux-Cocker and Hindley's sex worker stand-in) to several other well-known cultural artefacts, all of which are overlappingly targeted. Firstly, 'Me Oh Myra' is a comment on uses of Hindley by The Smiths (amongst others). Secondly, the sequence simultaneously critiques the deliberate controversy of depictions like Harvey's *Myra* (1995):⁷¹

⁷⁰ Indeed, as a band and as individual personas they have no more control over *Brass Eye*'s use of their image than Hindley has over hers.

⁷¹ Cashell, p. 16-27.



Indeed, 'Me Oh Myra' is broadly informed by the contemporaneous 'Sensation' exhibition and 'Young British Artists' movement, by Harvey's own account of his work, and by the public's reaction to such artefacts. The 'Young British Artist' movement was linked with Britpop and the art school St Martin's, an institution referenced by Pulp's song 'Common People'. Pulp were therefore a topical vehicle for Morris. The connection recurs in Cashell's quotation of 'Common People' lyric 'everybody hates a tourist' as the title of his chapter on Harvey's *Myra*.⁷² These instances indicate an intertextual cultural unconscious at work surrounding ideas of the North and of what it means to 'consume'

⁷² Cashell, p.4-10.

celebrity killers as cultural artefacts. Pulp's oeuvre is characterised by explorations of class tensions, heterosexuality, and the visual as well as verbal mythologising of a 'retro', 'kitsch' semi-ironic reconstitution of a stereotypical mid-century working-class Northern aesthetic.⁷³ The imaginative space of Hindley's inscription overlaps considerably with these areas; Cashell relates his connecting of Pulp with Harvey's *Myra* to his surmise that such forms of consumption, or 'tourism', represent a 'longing [... to be] liberated from the straightjacket of liberal morality if only for a fugitive hour of imaginative abandon', suggesting that he and Morris share the conclusion that Hindley and Pulp occupy similar and symbiotic semantic and aesthetic spaces.⁷⁴

A further intertext between Pulp and the mythology of the Moors Murders is their shared reliance on the iconography of urban working-class-coded spaces. An example of this can be found in *Beyond Belief's* opening scenes, as well as Sparrow's *Queens of Crime*.⁷⁵ Both explicitly locate Hindley and Brady within a recognisable landscape of modern, urban consumerism, and ascribe their appearance to their setting. Sparrow assigns them specifically working-class pursuits:⁷⁶

The [...] stock clerk and the girl with ash blonde hair [...] were so typical in appearance of two modern young urban workers that the public, expecting perhaps something bizarre, were startled. These were the young couple one might see at the bingo club, at the films, at the dog racing, or shopping at the supermarket on a Saturday morning.⁷⁷

⁷³ See also *From Hell's* depiction of Brady's street and Sutcliffe's family home.

⁷⁴ Cashell, pp.4-10.

⁷⁵ As I have discussed at greater length in Chapter One.

⁷⁶ When he claims 'one' would encounter them in such environs, a note of irony is struck; as a judge (and it would seem even more likely that such a figure would be upper(/middle) class at that time than now, when this is still predominantly the case) it seems improbable that he would have frequented bingo-halls, dog-racing establishments, or shopped for himself in a supermarket. This is emphasised by calling himself 'one', itself a class marker.

⁷⁷ Sparrow, 1973, p.17.

This working-class habitus is shared by the setting of Pulp's 'Common People' song and video: 'I took her to a supermarket | I don't know why | But I had to start it somewhere | So it started | There'.⁷⁸



All the products are labelled 'Pulp', and Cocker himself is in the supermarket trolley like a product: literally making themselves into a commodity. Anxieties around working-class access to commodities and leisure spaces is clear in Hansford Johnson and Sparrow's elitist conception of dangerous working-class pleasures and even Hoggart's suspicions of American consumer culture debasing British working-class communities.⁷⁹ We also see elements of this attitude in the sleeve notes to Pulp's *His and Hers*: 'Please deliver us from matching sweatshirts and [...] evenings sat on couple row [...] and] Sundays spent parading the aisles of Meadowhall [shopping centre].' It is significant that mainstream bourgeois and elite cultures' distrust of working-class, mass-cultural pleasures so quickly becomes adopted, altered and re-packaged by alternative, apparently rebellious subcultures obsessively wary of 'selling out', despite efforts to

⁷⁸ Pulp, 'Common People' on *Different Class* (Island Records, 1995).

⁷⁹ *The Uses of Literacy*, see the Introduction to this thesis.

adapt what is offered in ways that challenge the dominant narratives: anxiety around consumptions accrues from several different oppositional directions at once.

'Me Oh Myra' makes use of a further reference to Pulp, in which women are explicitly turned into literal commodities. In the video for 'Lipgloss' (Jarvis Cocker and Martin Wallace, 1993), band members, and particularly the song's nameless female protagonist, hold up a series of cards which act as commentary upon those holding them.⁸⁰ *Brass Eye* replicates this, both directly in the form of cards held by 'Purvis Grundy', but also indirectly by female characters holding cardboard cut-outs of Hindley's face over their own. The anonymous woman of 'Lipgloss' spends the whole video lying on a bed in a flimsy nightie, trying on wigs and makeup, trying to appear sexually attractive in a way that is foregrounded to the point of absurdity, and thus undercut, whilst drawing attention to the commodity-dependant, detachable, artificial demands of femininity.



In 'Decline' Morris exaggerates this trope of adopting the accoutrements of a detachable femininity – foregrounding the artificiality and performance of femininity – to benefit from the allure it supposedly bestows: rather than putting on a blonde wig, 'Me Oh Myra's' faceless females put on the *head* of the most famously chilling blonde whose sexuality is extreme. Through this, Morris magnifies to hilarity a literally visualised form

⁸⁰ An intertextual gesture towards Bob Dylan's famous video for 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', originally from D. A. Pennebaker's documentary about Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England, *Don't Look Back* (1967). The card-holding is also reminiscent of the information slate held by American arrestees in their custodial photographs.

of the claims Harvey makes for *Myra* and for Myra Hindley herself, that her visual iconicity relies on a sexual ‘pull’ (as I discuss below). Tellingly, his character is compelling women to put on that head *for his enjoyment*, rather than them choosing to do so. This draws attention to the longstanding trope of the female muse as the endlessly deployable, sexualised yet anonymous, raw material for male art. ‘Me Oh Myra’ also emphasises the material detachability of the mugshot as an artefact that can be physically altered and moved. The pastiche’s lyrics and mise-en-scène specifically refer to the uses of Hindley’s image as pornography. This is a clear comment on iconography and celebrity, and on the availability of both murderers and women in the public eye to the fetishising gaze.



In addition to spoofing Pulp, Morris’s guitar riff is clearly based on that of Blondie’s ‘Atomic’, which prominently contains the line ‘Oh *your hair* is beautiful tonight’,

foreshadowing Purvis Grundy's line that his 'song is about her hair' – a deliberately trivial and shallow excuse in contrast to Morrissey's caring claims for his song *Suffer Little Children*, as discussed above. Grundy urges listeners who bought it purely for shock value to 'throw it away' and then 'buy another copy because they like the song', seemingly critiquing Morrissey's remarks by forcing back into the frame both his own economic and commercial interests and the pleasurable elements of consuming such representations for the audience. Grundy's separation of 'her hair' from her as 'a [...] woman' emphasises her physical attributes as unmoored from any sense of inner self or identity, and yet his words are signalled as unreliable by his evident self-interest in uttering them. This scene neatly encapsulates the paradox of Hindley's representational meaning: the inescapable fact of her as herself is combined with the severing of her frozen appearance, as signifier, from the signified of her self and actions. A further bind is also established between attempting to describe and perhaps decry the proliferation of her image whilst accepting that we may derive interest, pleasure or even material gain from it.

The sketch constitutes a further example – and tacit examining – of the unconscious cultural logic at work in this index of scenes of self-sexualising inter-reflective Northern autoeroticism. 'Me Oh Myra' visually and verbally alludes to masturbation:

I used to have your picture in the toilet
I wanted you to see my naked body and oil it
But my mother had to catch me and spoil it



Reiterating common tropes of teenage sexual self-discovery and domestic public fields of surveillance and interference, the scene has one wall missing, through which the viewer observes – as if we were the bathroom mirror that returns his image, in a manner entirely reminiscent of Brady in *Beyond Belief* and Sutcliffe in *Portrait*. Ultimately it is the audience who reflects back the both-and-neither, real and mythical, image of these murderers into the space of their fictional counterparts. There is a complex overlap of gazes: one version of Grundy watches and narrates the scene while another acts it out, watched by both his mother and the viewer, placed as unseen spectator within this gaze-field. While the scene specifically depicts the use of Hindley's image as erotic inspiration, by placing her image on the wall it also places her in the position of surrogate viewer of this implied act (alongside us, the audience). A sex worker hired by Grundy to impersonate Hindley in the sketch is played by Morris himself, as is Grundy, a doubling that further underscores that the fantasy Hindley is a projection only of Grundy's own imagining – emphasising the *autoeroticism* of his erotic fantasy.

If, in the positioning of the gaze, the viewer inhabits the look of the fictional-Cocker as interacting in a fantasy sexual relationship with Hindley, it is also a self-reflexive as well as relational look (i.e. he is looking at her image thinking about *her* looking at *his* naked body). Towards the end of the song, Grundy taunts Brady, making sexuality a competition once again:

Listen up Brady,
I'm gonna have your lady
Just cause I want her
Just cause I can get at her
And you *can't*
So pogo on that, you twat.⁸¹

This figures the sexual conquest of women, whether imagined or real, as a gesture of defiance both to a homogenous, universalised feminine and also towards such males and masculinities 'higher' up the hierarchy. The fact that Grundy directly taunts Brady immediately after being pictured in a masturbatory interlude again indicates the competitive aspect, whilst also allowing him to act as Brady's surrogate. Brady, having formerly been sexually intimate with Hindley, is the parodic Cocker-surrogate Grundy's own surrogate in turn. Rather than Hindley, and access to sexual intimacy with her, the real goal is mastery over Brady and 'the world'. Revenge on some generalised hostile conception of the world through sexual transgression is something we see throughout Pulp's oeuvre, and, again, much more troublingly, further along the continuum of the same paradigm, in Brady's justification of the rape and murders he and Hindley carried out as acts of defiance to society as a whole.

The gendered power dynamic also enacts a literally economic trade in women: 'every time I see your picture Myra | I want to phone my latest girlfriend and fire her | and find

⁸¹ Replicating once more the triangulation of *Longford*, and the impotent riposte of the imprisoned Brady's taunts; a 'love triangle' centred around male-male competition and fascination again.

a prostitute who looks like you and hire her'. Grundy is placed in a position of semantic power over Hindley and all women ('fir[ing]' a girlfriend as though a relationship were a job, he the boss and she the worker). As such it also references Brady's power over Hindley and over other non-dominant males lower down the perceived hierarchy of masculinity. A relationship with or attraction to Hindley is rendered Other to domestic and normative femininity through an either/or binary of Myra/girlfriend, suggesting that only killers and sex workers look like Myra and these two types of women constitute ontologically separate orders to that of 'girlfriend'. This implies that one cannot have a relationship and also engage in the kind of fantasy that Myra provides or with the kind of woman that Myra is or represents.⁸² However the song conflates these strands into an economically ordered marketplace of femininity in which sex workers, girlfriends and celebrity killers are all available and deployable as commodities for male-coded enjoyment. Thus it claims a binary separation between the domestic and the extremity or excess of sexual economic exchange, yet this separation is simultaneously undermined by and maintained by the latter's function of safely containing such fantasies as un-askable *within* the domestic, relieving the tension created by – but also maintaining the impossibility of breaching – this boundary. This balancing act puts both forms of relation on a par with a business transaction, an exchange of commodities.⁸³

Cashell remarks on the pornographic element of Harvey's *Myra*, referring to it as 'tactile' and comparing it with Harvey's 'readers' wives' paintings also exhibited in 'Sensation'.⁸⁴

⁸² Which places Brady outside what 'one' can do – what it is conceptually possible for others – rendering him exceptional again, and prefiguring Grundy's direct challenge to him.

⁸³ The sexual economics at work in Pulp subvert the usual gender dynamic, but also, retain power for the male speaker through a reverse exoticising. For example, the Greek woman in 'Common People' and the rich socialite in *I Spy* are in positions of class power but gender vulnerability and thus the ideal for the classed sexual revenge in the economy laid claim to by the persona of Cocker, and that Morris taps into in *Brass Eye*.

⁸⁴ Cashell, pp.67-9; 75-7.

Harvey himself describes the ‘pull’ of Hindley’s mugshot as ‘a sexual thing’.⁸⁵ This demonstrates another way in which postmodern depictions of Hindley overlap with postmodern constructions of identity (particularly female identity) as inscribable spaces. Hindley’s use as an icon of femininity gone bad – a feature of contemporary trial accounts – is critiqued by offering Hindley as a locus in which conventional notions of femininity are undercut precisely because they are thrown into crisis. The narrative of Hindley as brutal female criminal, and thus transgressive of traditionally gendered behavioural patterns,⁸⁶ coexists in competition with the narrative of her as Brady’s lieutenant, subservient to his will, moved to capitulate out of love for him, and thus typical of such patterns.⁸⁷ The allusive system culturally connecting her to Pulp and The Smiths is one in which transgressive and conservative versions of gender and class are able to conflictually coexist. Morris makes explicit the ‘pornographic’ aspect that Cashell locates in *Myra*: ‘Me Oh Myra’ directly refers to the use of the picture *as* pornography. Harvey makes the distinction that his painting, *Myra*, is not a ‘real’ portrait, but rather the image of an image, replicating as it does the 1966 mugshot.⁸⁸ The afterlife of this image overwrites other records of Hindley, erasing her lived existence and identity, substituting in her place an emblematic blank which has been thematic to all subsequent representations of Hindley, whether unconsciously or consciously. It creates a distancing effect that bypasses the ethics of representing Hindley as Hindley. Harvey deliberately confronts an *image*, not a person, *but* confronts it as an image *of* that person, in context: he challenges the icon of Hindley with the return of its repressed

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.77.

⁸⁶ An attitude popular with both tabloid attempts to demonise Hindley and feminist attempts to emphasise her autonomy.

⁸⁷ ‘I know [...] she probably didn’t do any of the murders, [...] he was just in a relationship where she was probably too attached to the man who was doing it to extricate herself’: Harvey, quoted in Burn, 1997.

⁸⁸ Cashell, p.77. Harvey’s remarks are also typical of the sort of defensive self-justification artists make about their representations of Hindley, as we have seen in Morris’s pastiche of Morrissey’s comments.

social history. Harvey's re-presentation of the iconic representation of Hindley draws attention to this iconicity, and also to the semantic gap between the Hindley invoked *by* this image and a biographical Hindley. The myth of Hindley is constructed through, and works in tandem with, the icon of Hindley. Both are fashioned from titbits and offcuts of – yet work independently from – Hindley as a person.

Pulp songs and representations of Hindley, Brady and Sutcliffe are all cultural products that rely on and construct a commodified, exoticised gendered Northern working-class in relation to an implied Southern gaze. Such a gaze positions this imagined space as an escapist break from the implied viewer's own milieu, like a tourist on holiday.

Independently of how they are consumed, they are already subject to, and made under, an *internalised* Southern gaze: an exoticising gaze applied inwards. Cashell defines consumption of *Myra* as characterised by 'disengaged [...] aesthetic disinterestedness [...] like Cocker's Greek émigré[s ...] middle class consumer fantasies of working-class life'.⁸⁹ However, neither the song 'Common People' nor the consumption of the Moors Murders myth are about foreign tourism: the Greek girl's nationality is arbitrary and empty, her subjectivity beside the point – instead she is used as a ventriloquist's dummy for an self-reflexive dramatisation of intra-national rather than international cultural appropriation.⁹⁰ Both 'Common People' and Hindley's mugshot and its subsequent proliferation are directly created by Northerners, and are (directly in the former case and indirectly in the latter) the result of specific kinds of Northern working-class self-fashioning and cultural engagement. Consequently both do not simply engage with a British self-tourism, but enact the North's simultaneous tourism of

⁸⁹ Cashell, p.19. The song begins 'She came from Greece she had a thirst for knowledge | she studied sculpture at St Martin's college | that's where I | caught her eye.'

⁹⁰ At best, perhaps, her openness and unguarded naiveté about class is given as an indicator of her lack of awareness of its 'appropriate' (i.e. hypocritical) treatment of class in British culture.

itself and its self-perception as an object of tourism. Rather than a normative male gaze we can observe a Southern gaze, through which Northern cultural artefacts are perceived externally but which is also internalised.⁹¹

The connection between representations of the 'Moors Murderers' and Pulp, then, is the saleability and othering of a homogenised yet gender-split Northern working-class in binary opposition to a normatively centred middle-class South.⁹² The sexual slant to 'Me Oh Myra' is enabled by the band's perceived preoccupation with the seedier side of working-class sexuality, whilst also foregrounding compelling similarities in constructions of masculinity present in Brady's self-presentation and *Brass Eye's* parody version of Jarvis Cocker, 'Purvis Grundy' (a name surely intended to convey a grotty, sordid sexuality, coupling as it does a play on the word 'pervert' and the stereotypically working-class surname 'Grundy'). Hatherley defines Pulp's key elements as 'class, sex and urbanism', all of which are aspects of my conceptualisation of Northientalist commodification, and all of which feature heavily in accounts of Sutcliffe, Hindley and Brady.⁹³ He also characterises their canon as defined by an 'unstable combination of literacy and sexuality' and 'amateur pornography' – both topics obsessively and censoriously dwelt on at the Moors Murders trial and thenceforth in their representations.⁹⁴ Both cultural instances, although considerably different, confront, enact, and make spectacle from public discourses of combined hostility and fascination towards autodidactic working-class creative sexuality that fabricates its own objects and its own protagonists from what is available.

⁹¹ As Russell proposes in the film context. Russell, p.185.

⁹² In other words, structuring a general totalising tendency around a sharply divided (but differently so to that of the South) gender binary.

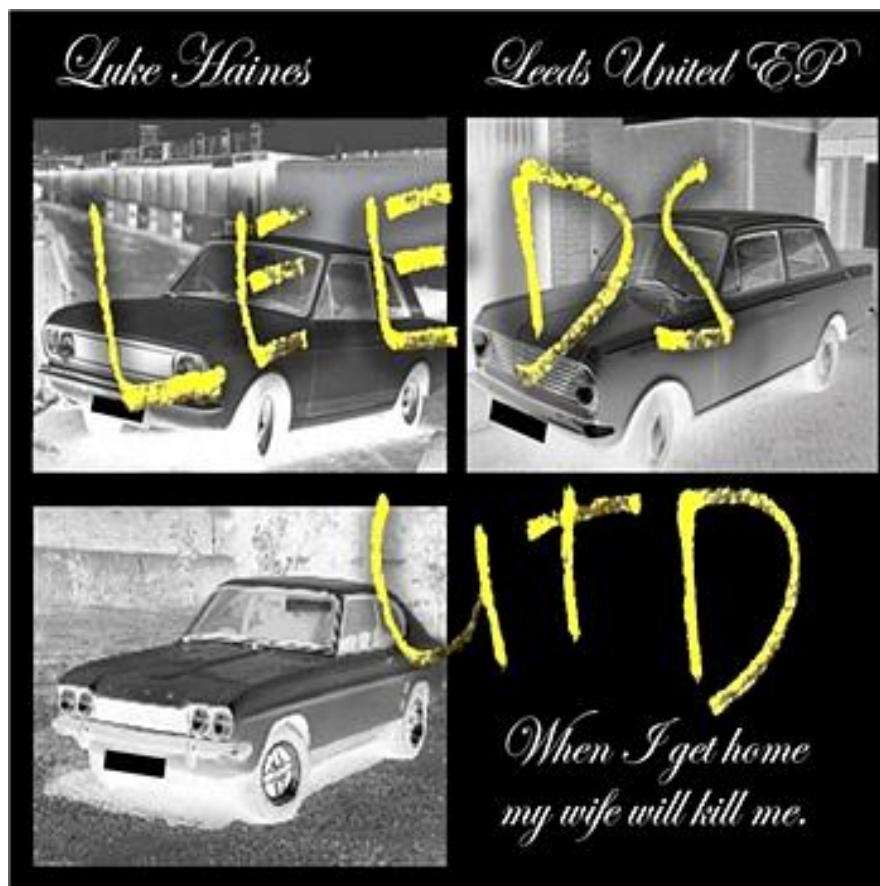
⁹³ Owen Hatherley, *Uncommon* (Winchester: Zero, 2011), pp.4-5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.2-4.

It's What the '70s Was About

Commodity has been the key structuring impetus for this chapter, the texts examined here, celebrity criminal representations, and the construction of the past in general. As I have argued in Chapter One, it is vital to constructing time, and, in addition, place and milieu. It is difficult to imagine how it would be possible to represent a historical era or evoke a time period *without* depicting commodities or cultural products: both the physical and immaterial worlds of capitalism are *all* commodity. It is also crucial to the meaning of representations themselves and how they change over time: texts inevitably comment on and reflect concerns in the times they were made *as well as* when they are read, telescopically condensing the two together in the moment of reading. Pop music is defined by newness, its own and that of its moment of reception for the audience. As Simon Reynolds says in *Retromania*, pop is about *now*, and now is always instantly tipping over into the past – ‘be here now’, as he describes it – creating an instant snapshot of the here and now which inevitably very quickly becomes the there and then.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. xix; p.xxix.



Luke Haines's 'Leeds United' (2007) demonstrates the iconography of the Yorkshire Ripper case and how commodities can construct time periods ('teddy boys' disco', 'World Of Sport', 'Ford Cortina Vauxhall Viva Ford Corsair' 'The [Yorkshire Evening Post]').⁹⁶ Indeed, commodity culture *is*, in some ways, not just 'culture' but an index of society more generally. The song's sonic style features archly tinkling piano over macho 1970s glam-stomp-style guitars and samples of a masculine crowd roaring. Haines claims it was inspired by his reading of *Somebody's Husband* and the 'Red Riding' quartet of novels, and initially 'start[ed] as a "love" song or mundane conversation at least, between Peter and Sonia Sutcliffe' but his scope changed, broadening to become 'about

⁹⁶ As I discussed in my Introduction, Wagg argues for the centrality of sport to the kind of aggressively macho culture of 1970s Yorkshire that shaped Sutcliffe, and its underlying importance for accounts of this killer. The connection between sport writing and turning crime into culture frequently recurs, especially with regards to writing the Ripper. The lines 'At Leeds United | they're chanting vengeance | It's a 13-0 defeat | I was beaten, we were gutted, I was sick as a parrot' echo this; the language of violence muted and trivialised by being made into a metaphor for sporting disappointment.

Yorkshire at the end of the 70's [...] and the last few years of the Ripper case'.⁹⁷ Haines specifies that his song is in dialogue with the quartet, not Peace's subsequent novel *Damned United* (about Leeds football club), and, unlike that novel, is 'set at the end of the 70s'. The 'United' of the title 'refers to the people of Leeds being united, in fear, hatred, and paranoia, against the ever present spectre of the Yorkshire Ripper.' Yet, despite his claim that the 'people [are] united [...] against' the Ripper, firstly, he himself mentions the football chants in support of the killer, or at least mocking the police, stating that a key 'Sutcliffe myth' is that 'Leeds United fans chant[ed] "Ripper 13, police nil" after the thirteenth body was discovered'.⁹⁸ Secondly, he creates a milieu of ultra-normality for Sutcliffe, in which the 'people of Leeds' (significantly, the male ones anyway) and he are united in their way of life and basic worldview. The song is focalised through an apparently everyman figure, switching, like Peace's quadrilogy, between the first, second and third person as he follows the same points on the map of the crimes as Sutcliffe so there is a sense both of an unavoidable involvement but also of a tracing of strategic nodes in the myth. In this simultaneous closeness and distance it reiterates the theme of Sutcliffe as one of many, typical of his milieu but also exceptional within it. Haines depicts the unnamed Sutcliffe 'on the terraces of Leeds united' as the 'one voice [that's] silent'. Haines presents Sutcliffe thus: 'one voice is silent | it's the man with jet black hair | and come to bed eyes | that's what he had | it's just another wet Saturday afternoon with the lads' (the equivalent of Throbbing Gristle's 'just another ordinary day in Manchester').⁹⁹ This not only renders him exceptional, giving an air of mystery and secrecy, but also something religious and messianic; a Gothic archetype like that of 'Night Shift', that, like in the Banshees song, is only heightened and made more spectral

⁹⁷ Haines, 2011, p.210-11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 252.

⁹⁹ This is another instance of unglossed references to these crimes, requiring, as Pleasance puts it, the reader to 'know too much' about the cases.

and pervasive by his anonymity. Yet immediately he is subsumed into quotidian time, ultra-prosaic and un-noticeable: ordinary weather, ordinary capitalist regulation of work and leisure, usual homosocial setting. The only description of him (at all, in the entire song) is via his hair and his eyes, simultaneously rendering him invisible and hyper visible, focussed in on these minute and individual features within a crowd scene: again we see the recurrence of what I term the 'hair and stare' as a locus of easily repeatable identity, a follicular persistence that, as with Hindley, is key to the visuality of Sutcliffe's mythology. Like her, Sutcliffe's aestheticised presence is quasi-sexualised, objectified, a locus of fascination, in a way that, outside *Beyond Belief*, Brady's representation is not. It is strongly reminiscent of Foucault's remark, as Downing has discussed, that when he and his team were analyzing the confession of Pierre Rivière (who produced a full and complex confessional on his 1835 murder of his mother, sister, and brother), they 'fell under the spell of the parricide with the reddish-brown eyes.'¹⁰⁰ In this song Sutcliffe is also the only person whose presence is felt, not only physically, but in any way at all: everyone else is merely a list of names or just an idea/a suggestion without specificity, much less physicality.

The silence ascribed to Sutcliffe is partly in keeping with his apparently taciturn nature in real life, but also hints at his inability to shape his own cultural meaning: his incoherence and yet deployability as a figure, available for use as cultural practitioners see fit. The line is followed shortly after by the sample of the crowd roaring (repeated at the end of each verse throughout the song and audibly underscoring the theme of unity). This singles him out as apart from his peers but also as undifferentiated from them; no-

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother: A Case of Parricide in the Nineteenth Century* [1973], trans. Frank Jellinek (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1975), p. xiii, quoted in Downing, p. 3.

one notices his silence, it is by its very nature unobtrusive: his absence from the centre of his own depiction in a song that is *about him* emphasising the brooding lacuna at the centre of his representation, his meaning, and symbolising the closedness of masculinity. He is like the proverbial needle in a haystack, the wood in the trees – the enemy within. This song is in effect saying *Sutcliffe* is what the '70s is all about, that he not only emerges from but emblematises prevalent themes of the period – its iconography as well as its cultural anxieties and norms – but also typifies the image we in the twenty-first century have of it. As Adam Kotsko quasi-jokingly opines, 'the 70s [are] widely acknowledged as the creepiest decade on record'.¹⁰¹

The song's first line, 'When I get home, my wife will kill me' (also written on the cover) enacts an ironic reversal of the expected roles of gendered violence, alluding both to Sutcliffe leaving the house and his wife to go out killing women, but also drawing on the rolling-pin-wielding working-class wife of the Andy Capp stereotype of the 'trouble 'n' strife', domestically othered woman. Haines lightly sketches '70s Leeds as a series of competing spatial and social realms: the domestic space of married women, the 'red light' areas of female sex workers, and the rest of the world for men – a literal *World of Sport* in which everything is fair game, theirs to play in, a world of pubs and cars and discos that exclude women ('leave the wife at home now') other than those who provide sex and backdrop but are not considered people. In the song itself they are purely a setting, an effect of driving the streets and of the places they work: like a red light itself. The lyrics continue, 'She's so house-proud, so don't tread dirt into the carpet', suggesting the killer-husband polluting the domestic sphere, presumably through contact with sex workers – and/or murder – contaminating homely space with matter out of place. This

¹⁰¹ Kotsko, p.42.

conveys both the mingling of the domestic and the repressed libidinal areas of violence and sex, but also the kind of emblematic image used by true crime to cover them – the genre’s use of physical metaphors signalled clearly *as* metaphors. The phrase also implies the act of oppressing; to treat others like dirt means to consider them worthless, eradicable, in need of destruction. This attitude was particularly prevalent towards sex workers (and still is), an aspect the phrase foregrounds in context because ‘dirt’ is used as a derogatory term for sexual matters. In *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper* the term is used to indicate Sutcliffe’s display of contempt during his trial, ‘E sat [...] an gawped at judge an jury | as if all t’lot were dirt’.¹⁰²

Mentioning Chapeltown establishes the milieu; in the ‘70s it was a run-down, predominantly working-class suburb of Leeds frequented by sex workers and by Peter Sutcliffe. The song uses the imagery of red lights to refer both to cars and their motion through the urban landscape, but also to urban space as mapped out by sex work, i.e. the ‘red light district’. The ‘lights [...] go[ing] out’ cinematically conveys a car stopping (to pick up a sex worker) but also of the inability to see, perhaps because of the privacy required for such work, but also a sinister implication of something being extinguished or silenced – the privacy required for killing – creating a parallel between the two and thus highlighting the heightened vulnerability of sex workers to those who wish to harm them. The gendered segregation of the song creates a binary in which women, both wives and sex workers, are atomised, isolated, kept to their ‘proper’ place, while men are united – the voices on the terraces, in which Sutcliffe is silently hidden, are a unified male chorus. This is reiterated by the list of masculine Northern/working-class interests given as a typical Saturday set of activities: ‘at the Teddy boys’ disco | propping up the

¹⁰² Morrison, 1987, p.33.

bar, World Of Sport, then fixing the car', creating a sense of separate spheres, in which wives must be kept apart from male bonding, (it's a boys' disco), echoing the era's neat Madonna/whore dichotomy of these roles and reminiscent of Sutcliffe's father's remark in *Somebody's Husband*: 'women are for frying bacon and screwing'.

Haines explicitly links the reification of sexual exploitation and economic exchange within an unequal set of power relations with the decade itself: in the red light district, what can be bought 'for the price of five pounds | [Is] what the seventies were about'. The locating of gender inequality, rigid masculinity, and sexual violence as innately paramount to the decade of the '70s pervades many mid-to-late 2000s cultural artefacts, especially television. The 2006-07 BBC crime drama *Life on Mars*,¹⁰³ for example, had a 'loveable rogue' antihero in the form of Gene Hunt, whose schtick was to make offensive (but not too offensive) remarks, manufacturing an excuse to vicariously partake in 'forbidden' transgressions justified by supposedly lampooning the attitudes they express. The show effected a comic and audio-visually pleasurable re-enactment of bigotry and trauma set against the iconic commodities that form a recognisable set of *I Love The 70s* affective nostalgia tokens, a mainstay of the programme's – and indeed, this cultural moment's – oeuvre, confronting it with its own bricolage at the same time in the form of man-out-of-time protagonist Sam Tyler. Such a rolling set backdrop of exoticised socio-temporally-located cultural products as a background for horrors is *exactly* the technique of true crime's spatial setting I have discussed throughout, albeit in that particular programme, in service of a different genre. It is fruitful to recall that the same year that 'Leeds United' was released, *The Damned United* was published, Haines met Peace at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, 'Wearside Jack' was sentenced for his hoax of

¹⁰³ Named after the 1973 David Bowie single of the same name.

over 3 decades before, and *The Ripper Hoaxer: Wearside Jack, Evil, Longford and Life On Mars* were all broadcast. Clearly, this was a cultural moment of engagement with and anxiety around the past, the commodities that construct it in memory and society, and the appalling vistas emerging from beneath its spectacle, for whose broader implications crime narratives provided a method of both containment and confrontation.

Childhood trauma forms a huge but relatively latent theme of this television programme (and many of these texts)'s staging of the seventies. One might recall Kotsko's assertion that it is the 'creepiest' decade. New journalist Tom Wolfe referred to it as the 'me decade', referring to the emergence of a ruthless 'atomized individualism' presaging the neoliberal subject.¹⁰⁴ Certainly by the mid-2000s there had arisen a tacit public knowledge that many celebrities of the era were considered sexually suspect and a discomfort around attitudes to consent and the sexualisation of children, particularly following the 1990s paedophile panic. Indeed, our own cultural moment seems on the cusp of the closure of one episteme and the full emergence of another – between pre- and post- Yewtree rape/consent watershed – and this is often represented as a new apprehension of the 'awfulness' of the '70s, rather than an acknowledgement that such systemic horrors are still being perpetrated. *Brass Eye's* 'Paedogeddon' (2001), a satirical real-crime TV pastiche of the media-engineered moral panic around paedophilia, featured a segment about how acceptable such behaviour was in the 1970s, specifically in a musical context. This took the form of a music video by a glam-rock band

¹⁰⁴ Tom Wolfe, 'The "Me" Decade and the Third Great Awakening', *Mauve Gloves & Madmen* (New York: Clutter and Vine, 1976), pp. 126–167.

clearly satirising Gary Glitter, called 'Playground Bang-a-round', about committing sexual crimes against children in a play area.¹⁰⁵



These instances seem to indicate a widespread buried knowledge — an open secret, simultaneously known and unknown. These accurate jokes already know what everyone will be so shocked and yet not surprised to learn. Haines relates this repressed rape-cultural knowledge back directly to the Ripper: in '21st Century Man' (*21st Century Man/Achtung Mutha* (2009)) Haines gives a potted précis of the mid-late 20th century and recounts his own life alongside this: his summary of the 1970s includes the couplet 'dirty old men in flasher macs | I was frightened of Wearside Jack'.¹⁰⁶

The song continues,

Little monsters running round,
Little blighters in the carpet

¹⁰⁵ Glitter, whose real name was Paul Gadd, was arrested in 1997 and convicted in 1999 for possessing thousands of items of child pornography. Later, Glitter faced criminal charges and deportation across several countries including Vietnam and Cambodia and the UK connected with actual and suspected child sexual abuse, after a Vietnamese court found him guilty of obscene acts with minors in 2006. He was in the public eye at the time leading up to the release of Haines' song about him, and had already long been a tabloid staple and figure of public hate by this point. Finally in 2012 he was arrested again for child abuse during operation Yewtree.

¹⁰⁶ Written (and released) pre-Yewtree. See also: Haines' former band The Auteurs' song 'Future Generation' (1999): 'I put a pox upon the seventies | For a future generation'.

They're hidden in the walls
In the attic and in the cupboards
And in the House of Lords
The chamber of horrors at Madame Tussauds
Out with the old, we've got to make room for them all

Whilst Haines, from his reading of Burn, identifies 'Sutcliffe whiling away his spare time in a decrepit waxwork museum' as one of his three key Ripper myths (the others being the football chant and the fact that the investigation at one point questioned Jimmy Savile),¹⁰⁷ this reference to Tussauds waxworks is also a way of encapsulating this media transformation of known murderers and abusers.¹⁰⁸ The dichotomy of the 'hidden' and 'on display', like that of 'secret' and 'famous', suggest parallels between the famous criminal and the criminal famous. It also highlights the contrast between the fate of the victims 'hidden in the walls', anonymous, like building materials or ballast, merely matter, and the perpetrators 'in the house of Lords':¹⁰⁹ perhaps famous, perhaps anonymous to the public, but respected and safe and with full personhood. These grandees share a conceptual and literal space with killers in 'the chamber of horrors': entertainment objects that stand in for or represent themselves; the existing art objects of their own ignominy – a fitting metaphor for Hindley, Sutcliffe et al's cultural afterlives. This is reminiscent of 'Very Friendly', where in the space of just one line Edward Evans switches from being a person (fully realised as such by the song) to merely matter – and what's more merely a cultural node, or a pinprick in a tapestry of information and intertext: becoming 'just a lump of stuff | Just a bit more information.'

¹⁰⁷ Haines, 2011, p.211.

¹⁰⁸ I draw parallels in Chapter One between this and Williams's use of peep show, music hall and other 'gaudy' mass entertainments and spectacle.

¹⁰⁹ See also The Manic Street Preachers' 'Archives of Pain': 'nail it to the House of Lords | you will be buried in the same box as a killer'.

When 'Leeds United' was written (it was released in 2005), Jimmy Savile's crimes were not yet a matter of public record: the apparently beloved national treasure and children's entertainer, philanthropist, trustee of children's hospitals and friend to the British establishment including Margaret Thatcher and the royal family, was revealed just after his death in 2011 to have been a long term serial rapist and child abuser. As this song and so much else reveals, it seems his guilt was part of a national unconscious awareness; after its discovery signs of it seemed to be everywhere. Haines does make reference to this in later performances in his 'stage banter', and in interviews – but on the same album, *Off My Rocker at the Art School Bop* (2006), he has songs about both Jonathan King ('The Walton Hop') and Gary Glitter ('Bad Reputation'), both of whom were, by 2006, well known as showbiz paedophiles; indeed the songs themselves would be meaningless were this not the case. Apparently his 2012 album *The North Sea Scrolls* had been going to contain a song about Savile, but in the wake of the unfolding investigation and its subsequent findings Haines decided against pursuing this. Thus, in an interview with *The Quietus*, life appeared to spoof *Brass Eye* spoofing Morrissey when Haines joked that since *Art School Bop* had turned out (with the news about Savile) to have 'three songs about paedophiles [...] maybe I should re-release it now that it's all the rage' – and then did so, in download-only form, a month later.¹¹⁰ The reference to Kendo Nagasaki – a composite 1970s wrestler played by several different people,¹¹¹ and thus capable of being doubly 'unmasked' – foregrounds the idea of false personas, emblematising the layers of reputation that accrue to public figures. Under the literal mask of the wrestler, under the 'Kendo Nagasaki' persona, there may be a deeper

¹¹⁰ John Doran, 'Luke Haines On Art School Bop Reissue & Jimmy Savile', *The Quietus*, 19 January 2013, [<http://thequietus.com/articles/11171-luke-haines-on-reissues-albini-jimmy-savile>] [ACCESSED 24/11/13].

¹¹¹ At the time the song was set this role was being performed by Peter Thornley. Haines later made a concept album based around the subject, *9½ Psychedelic Meditations on British Wrestling of the 1970s and early '80s* (2011).

identity, that of Ripper. By referring to this, and listing a range of celebrities 'it could be', the song highlights the anonymity and unknowability of the Ripper – that he could be anyone, he's everywhere and nowhere while simultaneously reminding us that powerful people (especially over this area and this time period) may differ considerably from their public persona.

In the above-quoted song lyric the language of vermin, parasites and infestation is striking. 'Little monsters' and 'little blighters' is minimising and belittling, suggestive of children or animals – of people not granted full humanity – as well creating literal connotations of blight. The hectic furtive motion the verse invokes ('running round [...] in the carpet [and] the walls') creates a sense of disorder, chaos, unchecked organic proliferation as threat, suggesting the influence of Burn's *Somebody's Husband*, which depicts the Sutcliffe household as teeming with anarchic organic matter, full of children, adults, animals, viscerally raw food, and sexual acts, polluting one another and proliferating out of control. Both texts convey a brute reified physicality to human existence, implying a sense of matter out of places and a fear of the masses, of a working-class run vulgarly and bodily amok. The use of the plural ('monsters', 'blighters') and the sense of plurality and motion accorded them implies there's not one Ripper (or monster, or blight) but many – both suggesting a replication of the Ripper's values and sentiments far beyond this singular receptacle of cultural hatred that can be locked away and absolve the rest of society. It also echoes the plot of 'Red Riding', whose twist is that the vast bulk of its corruption, chaos, violence and pain are unrelated to the Ripper's doings, and indeed are conducted by organs of state, the definers of history, powerful, respected business leaders, politicians and celebrities. The term 'in the carpets' suggests hidden secrets (as in the colloquial phrase to 'sweep something under

the carpet' meaning to cover up an unpleasantness), and also hidden bodies, echoing Mandy Wymer and Mrs Dawson's refrain throughout *Nineteen Seventy Four*, 'tell them about the others, beneath the beautiful carpets'.¹¹² We come full circle and find ourselves back with the 'house-proud' wife of the opening lines: 'don't tread dirt into the carpet'. Once again, as in *Once* (see Chapter One) sexual violence becomes figured as the mess men create that intrudes on the harmony of home and must be cleaned up by women. The 'they' of this verse shifts as it proceeds, from victims to criminals, and between types of criminals: those who are protected, allowed to remain perceived as not criminals, and those who are caught: – the contrast between those like Savile, who we now know about but who were previously lauded alongside their actions as abusers, who are respected rich, powerful, compared to those who are turned into monsters and figures of cosy commercial fear, like Sutcliffe.

In its most self-declaratively visible intertextual reference to Peace's 'Red Riding' novels the song ends with:

The North, the North
Where we do what we want to
The North the North
Where we do what we like
(repeated)

This phrase is a repeated refrain, in both *Red Riding* the novels and the film adaptations; indeed it is said by character Bob Craven in the latter as he throws Dunford out of the van after abusing and torturing him. It is the focal point of several scenes, and at first we only hear it uttered by Craven like war cry presaging his violence. Yet in *1980* a

¹¹² Haines and Peace are both influenced by the Situationist movement, whose famous slogan 'under the stones the beach' (meaning what could life be like without capitalism over-inscribed onto it) echoes in 'under the beautiful carpets' (i.e what could life be like without death writ into the landscape and the most intimate of dwelling places).

flashback scene shows Bill Molloy, a senior police officer, previously toasting the cabal of corrupt police and their associates with it, a means of binding them as brothers in arms. So, Craven's function and mechanism in behaving as a footsoldier is underscored and revealed; the phrase is a meme, a mantra, a password, and, proliferates from one figure to another, acting as a command to subordinates but also a way of conducting operations. So, just as the social crime is that there are many 'rippers', the true blight is there are many blighters: the exceptional traits deployed on figures such as Craven ultimately are revealed to be the trappings of their membership of a mass after all. They are, in fact, 'as Northern as our own kind', and thus, 'one of your own'. As Downing states, 'the figure of the killer [as] described by Brady and Wilson is not out of the ordinary at all—he is merely an exaggeration, or the extreme logical endpoint, of masculine patriarchal domination, and his othering as "different" serves to exculpate less extravagant exhibitions of misogyny.'

Conclusion: Murder Is Ordinary

‘Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start.’¹

— Raymond Williams, ‘Culture is Ordinary’.

‘in the pursuit of information about British domestic life [...] I began looking at murder cases [...] purely, really, for the sake of their incidental detail. [...]

“Ordinariness” [...] is right at the core of this [...] it’s the small, unlovely places of life that have always called most eloquently to me: they’re the ones that traditional histories tend to overlook, but they often provide the settings for some of our most intense personal dramas [...] and [...] the “ordinary” can accommodate thoroughly extraordinary levels of passion and tragedy [...] desire, transgression and moral crisis.’

— Sarah Waters on writing *The Paying Guests*.²

This thesis has examined how representations of Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, the ‘Moors Murderers’, and Peter Sutcliffe, the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’, have changed over time, and how they have been used to explore issues beyond the cases’ immediate historical-legal context. Representations of Northern-ness and of criminality both have pre-existing historical trajectories and generic conventions, some of which I have traced in this research. As this thesis has demonstrated, the historical and cultural arc of these two criminal cases has been shaped at all points in its evolution by anxieties about class, gender, region and sexuality, and it has fed into and shaped those anxieties in turn. Furthermore, this has both fuelled and been fuelled by the development of the figure of the celebrity criminal and late capitalist commodity culture more generally. What these celebrity criminals have been used to say has changed over time, reflecting changing fears and focuses of the decade. For example in the case of the ‘Moors Murderers’, the trajectory has broadly shifted from immediate concerns about class and region at the time of the trial, through rebellion and authority in the seventies, sexuality and the emerging emblematic figure of the serial killer in the eighties, paedophile panic in the

¹ Raymond Williams, ‘Culture is Ordinary’, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London, Verso, 1989) pp.3-14.

² Sarah Waters, ‘Sarah Waters: “I wanted *The Paying Guests* to be sexy without being a romp”’, *The Guardian*, 6 June 2015.

'90s, to encapsulating concerns about celebrity as negative, shallow or debased by the end of the twentieth and early twenty-first century.

I argue that the primary underlying structure of true crime is the counterbalance between the exceptional and the everyday, and their reliance on one another. It is in service of this that the secondary key structuring technique of true crime operates: the recording and accumulation of detail, from the affective details of true-crime writing, to the 'evidential' approach of true crime onscreen, and the obsession with isolated but significant details in songs about real crimes. Yet, this is not a result of the objects under its gaze; rather, its gaze constructs those objects. It is our reading of them *as* affective, *as* the clues of the retrospectively deviant-coded before-time of the crime and as evidence of the after(math) that gives them their aura and their significance. Otherwise, as Brady retorts in *Evil* when he refuses to co-operate with the investigating officer's reading of the images of himself and Hindley on the moor, they are 'just pictures'. This sentiment is reiterated in *Island*, when Joe uses identical phrasing to rebuff Holly's idea that images of landscape can be used to find treasure or graves. Without this affective gaze such detail, as Throbbing Gristle sang, is 'just another bit of information'.

In analysing the cultural meaning of these criminal cases and their representational after-echoes, applying the theories of Schmid and Downing to a new range of figures and artefacts, this thesis has shown how these texts demonstrate that true crime can expose and explore the unequal power relations inherent in capitalism, both constructing the figure of the criminal as – and uncoupling that figure from a mythology that renders them – falsely ontologically separate from state, economic and discursive violences. The historical specificity of the cultural production and media intertexts of the texts

discussed in the thesis are specific to the times in which they were produced, but the appalling vistas they return to view remain with us and continue to impact our apprehension of power, state violence, celebrity and rape culture as further abuses emerge to history's view.

The Devil's in the Detail: Opportunities for further research

My research has incorporated work from various fields and as such my findings can be applied to criminal cases, Northern representations, and true crime and true crime-influenced pop-cultural texts. This thesis offers a new reading of such texts as have been critically examined, whilst bringing scholarly attention to the large number of texts analysed within this thesis that have not previously been subject to a sustained critical scrutiny – and in so doing offers a springboard for future research into these genres and texts. Some directions future work may take are considered here.

Firstly, my conception of Northientalism, and the work it has done to elucidate the construction of Northern killers, Northern bodies, Northern spaces and Northern celebrity would be of great use in taking the study of all of these areas further. I have examined and identified Northientalist elements in these texts, and in so doing have addressed what is specifically Northern about these representations and how 'Northernness' is made. There are many other Northern killers whose cases have productive overlap with the murderers this thesis covers. Donald Nielson (the 'Black Panther'), for example, was also operating in 1970s Yorkshire and bears comparison with and analysis within the same context as Sutcliffe. This broader framework could also be applied in a

more precisely Scottish-specific context. Depictions of Dennis Nilsen's Scottish background make for fruitful comparisons with Brady's, because of the points of difference and similarity in how their gender presentation, sexuality, class positioning, and regional location are represented – and how, despite the differences therein, their country of origin is a consistent touchpoint of some kind of qualitative and explanatory essence.

Future projects may develop the broader questions of abuse culture, how celebrity interacts with justice, official history, and cover-ups. Additionally, 'Indie' and alternative music's relationship to history, and specifically to the history of violence and crime, also appears a fruitful avenue of enquiry. The material covered in Chapter Three provides many possibilities for expanding this focus, and, for developing Downing's thesis of exceptional killer as artist into a specifically 'rock and roll' arena. The overlap between the rock star and the killer has especially chilling resonance as accounts of abuse with impunity by stars continue to be uncovered; disk jockeys, of whom Jimmy Saville is the most famous rather than the only example, could also be considered using my analytical framework.

Another idea emerging from this thesis that merits further investigation is that of celebrity crime representations, divided up by the killer they depict, as forming coherent subgenres unto themselves, with their own specific traditions, iconographies and techniques. There is also a great deal more work to be done on the canonical texts of true crime: applying sustained literary and cultural analysis to Williams' *Beyond Belief* or Burn's *Somebody's Husband*, for instance. Finally, most of all, I am determined to return to the productive theme with which I began Chapter One, and which has

saturated and informed this thesis as a whole, that of the primary importance of *material detail* for true crime and related textual products. This opens up the realisation that true-crime writing historically and formally emerges from the context of, and draws upon strategies from, Modernism. This, along with other influences such as the mid-century social realist novel, has shaped the formal materiality of true-crime writing. My examples in Chapter One clearly demonstrate that there is much evidence of this across many texts, and in the course of my research I encountered many more such examples. I am keen to investigate this further. Such work has the potential to enable future researchers to fill in some hitherto unexamined gaps, and indeed to make historical, formal and generic connections that thus far have been overlooked. Indeed, not only can cultural critics learn from this study, but its potential insights regarding Modernism, realism and minute detail, as related to true crime, can help literary critics to fill in a lacuna in their understanding of twentieth-century literature and its history.

Such use of the material can defamiliarise the ordinary, and thus force us to re-see the violence in the everyday. Downing argues that the figure of the exceptional killer is used by society to ignore such an uncomfortable seeing:

By focusing on the evil that those individual murderers do, our attention is diverted from our complicity with a broader, systemic culture of symbolic and actual violence characterized by hetero- patriarchy, homophobia, the “ownership” of children, racial and ethnic oppression, and economic inequality.³

I would contend that true crime’s strategic overabundance of matter and of minutiae has the potential to undo its own exceptionality, and thus to reveal what was at stake in constructing it in the first place. Details serve as clues, not only within the narratives themselves, but textually, revealing the stakes and impulses behind the shaping of their

³ Downing, pp.195-6.

constructions. They also create matter, commodities, *stuff*, piling up a reality effect that is constructed by the minute in crime fiction and related forms of writing. To paraphrase and extrapolate from Roland Barthes, they can thicken the texture of reality, and slow down our processing of what is being conveyed to us.⁴ This may account in part for some true crime texts' divergent and contradictory moods and possibilities – from the moments of lyrical dreamlike escapism of Williams's 'Gothic soap opera', to those of grainy close up focus in David Peace or Throbbing Gristle. Indeed, true-crime-influenced fictions such as those of the 'Red Riding' novels, Jean Rafferty's *Myra, Beyond Saddleworth*, or Rupert Thompson's *Death of a Murderer* are so revealing of the tensions and conventions of true crime precisely *because* they distort this use of detail in a variety of different ways that defamiliarise the traditions upon which they draw. They do so in many ways but their use of material detail is of particular interest to me: Peace strips down the physical to a visually noir set of indistinct yet vivid impressions; Rafferty crams simultaneously generic yet specific detail into her speculative novel, overloading the form, while Thompson's use of case detail constitutes a precise yet uncannily dislocated shadow version of the crimes, haunting the text with the ordinariness of child abuse. This porous, semi-true-crime strategy is becoming more and more noticeable as a trend in recent true crime fictions (which further develop and complicate the genre, in related but different ways to the podcasts and screen media, as I describe shortly).⁵ Their excessive or distorted use of the conventions of creating a sense of realness reveals and highlights the constructedness of the apparently real itself – and of the very devices *used to create that sense of realness in the first place*.

⁴ Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', *The Rustle of Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, trans. Richard Howard), pp. 141-148.

⁵ Notable examples include *I'm Jack* (2015) by Mark Blacklock and *You Could Do Something Amazing With Your Life (You Are Raoul Moat)* (2014) by Andrew Hankinson.

Limits to the Thesis: New Developments in True Crime

These issues are playing out in recent developments in true crime. At the current cultural moment (i.e. 2016) true crime is developing and exploring a new set of representational traditions by which to construct the meaning of criminal cases and of killers. This thesis inevitably presents a snapshot both of my research at a certain point in time and of the present day's assessment of the time periods it covers, filtered through various immediate presents: many 'then's captured in a variety of 'now's. It also carries with it a snapshot of the current cultural moment in which the generic constraints and traditions of true crime as we have known it since the 1950s is beginning to shift and slip away as a new set of generic tropes and techniques appears to emerge.

A recent boom of representations of real-life criminal cases, in both the UK and particularly in America has – perhaps in a case of Derridean closure, whereby a mode of thought defining a time period only becomes visible and comprehensible in its demise – moved away from presenting the exceptional celebrity criminal as the 'individual par excellence'.⁶ Instead, it has now increasingly turned its gaze outwards upon society, and sought to destabilise the very category of criminal by engaging in a newfound focus on the wrongly accused. There are clear antecedents to this trend, for example 2012 saw the release of both the film and book of *The Central Park Five* (about the wrongful

⁶ Timothy Clark summarises this as a process '[in] which a historical epoch is discerned as such, in its closure, rendering its intellectual structures both newly perceptible and philosophically exhausted', Timothy Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism' *Oxford Literary Review*, 32:1 (2010), pp. 131-149; Downing, p.101.

convictions in the Central Park jogger case) and of the film *West of Memphis*, about the West Memphis Three. The latter case was also previously made into a trilogy of films *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* (1996), *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations* (2000) and *Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory* (2011).

There has been a recent burst of interest in, and screen and podcast documentary and dramadoc representations of, real-life cases. While some, like *The Jinx* (2015) and *You Must Remember This* (2015) continue the established true crime trend of centring the narrative around an exceptionalised killer, texts including *Making A Murderer* (2015), *Serial* (2014), *American Crime Story* (2016), *Untold*, (2016) *The Trail Went Cold* (2016) indicate that the focus is beginning to shift. While there is still often the central celebrity figure or process of celebrity-making, there is a developing structural focus on the systemic – the process – the previously invisibly normative machinations of the justice system. What we are seeing now is true crime evolving to meet the criticisms both of cultural commentators and academics (to some extent) and also the political and social needs of society – from the Black Lives Matter movement to the growing public awareness of the prison industrial complex *as* industrial complex.

This shift has coincided with a simultaneous change in perceptions of true crime, which has entered a new phase of ‘cool’ and of respectability, in a way previously often lacking. This in itself is a construction: the new ‘cool’ and intellectual social capital of true crime is constructed on the myth that previously it was ‘trashy’, undervalued, overlooked; i.e. on the construction of the current cultural moment’s difference from what went before, wilfully eliding the (fluctuating but) consistently high popularity of true crime. It has had

previous cycles in and out of relatively 'respectable' favour – and there are genres of it that continue to be seen as lowbrow, 'trashy', etc., today.

The underlying base point that emerges from this thesis is that capitalism turns everything into objects that only have exchange value, so, are only worth anything insofar as they are saleable. Under the conditions of radical reification, the killer, to draw from Downing's assessment of murderers as epitomising the ideals of neoliberal individualism, is capitalism's ideal subject *and* object; a ruthless consumer and objectifier of others, but the raw material from which endless commodities can be produced, and, in that production, constructed from the commodities of capitalist society: not so much Seltzer's 'mass in person' as commodity in person. We, the audience, view both victim and killer alike only through mythological goggles, dimly perceiving their shapes through their marketable generic filters, their physical-detail-constructed iconographic positioning:





As the disembodied presence of Jack the Ripper comments, as he haunts Peter Sutcliffe's living room in *From Hell* (pictured above), 'the world of matter is naught but a tinker's chest filled up with stained and graceless baubles'.⁷

⁷ Moore and Campbell, Chapter 14, p.19.

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